

No. LXXXIV.—October, 1902.

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THE

Manchester

Quarterly

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND ART.



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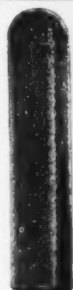
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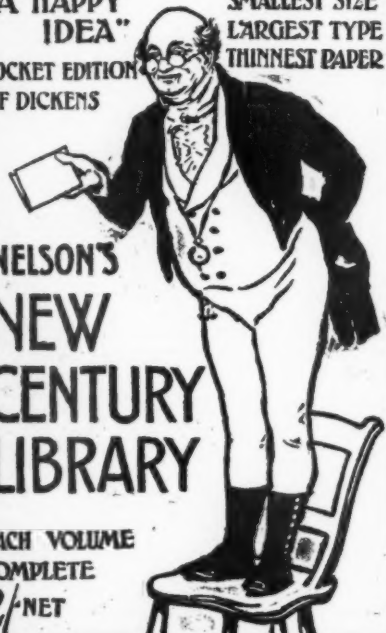
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MANCHESTER QUARTERLY ADVERTISER,

OCTOBER, 1902.

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FOUNDED 1862

The objects of the MANCHESTER LITERARY CLUB are:—

1. To encourage the pursuit of Literature and Art; to promote research in the several departments of intellectual work; and to further the interests of Authors and Artists in Lancashire.
2. To publish from time to time works illustrating or elucidating the literature, art, and history of the County.
3. To provide a place of meeting where persons interested in the furtherance of these objects can associate together.

The methods by which these objects are sought to be obtained are:—

1. The holding of weekly meetings, from October to April, for social intercourse, and for the hearing and discussion of papers.
2. The publication of such papers, at length or abridged, in a Magazine entitled the *Manchester Quarterly*, as well as in an annual volume of Transactions; and of other work undertaken at the instance of the club, including a projected series of volumes dealing with local literature.
3. The formation of a library consisting of (a) works by members, (b) books by local writers or relating to the locality, and (c) general works of reference.
4. The exhibition, as occasion offers, of pictures by artist members of the Club.

Membership of the Club is limited to authors, journalists, men of letters, painters, sculptors, architects, engravers, musical composers, members of the learned professions, and of English and foreign universities, librarians, and generally persons engaged or specially interested in literary or artistic pursuits.

The meetings are held at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, every Monday evening during the Session. Each Session opens and closes with a *Conversazione*. There are also occasional Musical and Dramatic Evenings, and a Christmas Supper. During the vacation excursions are held, of which due notice is given.

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CUTHBERT EVAN TYRER.



OUR SCHOLAR-GIPSY.

BY JOHN MORTIMER.

Each on his own strict line we move.—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

IT is nigh upon twelve years since my friend, Cuthbert Evan Tyrer, closed his ledgers for the last time at the bank in Mosley Street, and, like Waring, took up his staff and scrip, determined no longer to walk up and down this, to him, most weary, work-worn town. Those of us who knew him intimately did not marvel at this apparently erratic breaking of bounds, for, apart from certain conditions of delicate health, very emphatically had he made us aware how the dull routine of business bored him. Though he did his duty there most faithfully, to him "the desks' dead wood" was peculiarly distasteful. "Keep to the bank and the bank will keep you," the advice given by Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton in similar circumstances, would have been ineffectual with our friend. For eighteen years, in two varying periods—with an interval between of five years, during which he had studied at Oxford, bringing away with him, and with some distinction, the degree of Bachelor of Arts—he had been in bondage, perhaps he would have said (though not offensively) to the Philistines. Though, in fact, or in figures, he had dealt with it in vast quantities, he had no love for lucre; the accumulation of it

had for him, personally, no attractions. Randolph Caldecott had left his desk there to find a freer scope in the exercise of his wonderful art, but there had been others in that great banking house—to wit, Paul Moon James and William Langton—men of similar tastes to our friend, poets, too, within their limits, who had been content with their surroundings to the end of their days. The end came for Tyrer, however, when the circumstances for emancipation were favourable, and he was free to indulge that divine hunger within him for fairer scenes and more congenial conditions of life.

This was in the year 1891, and henceforth he became, like Waring, a wanderer, a poet-pilgrim, known to us as our Scholar-Gipsy, whose devious footsteps led him to many shrines of nature and of art in Northern and Southern Europe. One thing, however, in his leaving us, was a source of wonder, and that was how one so much loved by his companions in the bank, and by his friends without, and in whom there was such a delicate susceptibility to the finer social relationships, expressed on his part with a tenderness that was sometimes almost pathetic, should have elected to become a Solitary, and take those chances in his travel of finding "his warmest welcome at an inn."

It was said of that other "Scholar-Gipsy" that, after leaving them, "he came to Oxford and his friends no more" but this was not the case with Tyrer. At certain seasons, and sometimes unexpectedly, he would come back to us, bringing with him the old sweet influences, and, until the gad-fly stung him again, happy if he could take up his brief abode in his old-accustomed rooms, made sacred to him because Matthew Arnold had sometimes visited there when his son was in residence.

My friendship with him dates back some twenty years

or more, when he shyly sought admission to the Literary Club. After coming amongst us, we were not slow to discover in him a marked individuality, combined with qualities of a rare and attractive kind. In a somewhat frail body there was enshrined "a pard-like spirit, beautiful and swift," sensitive in its expression to an uncommon degree. There was about him, too, if one may so express it, an intense inwardness of intellectual life, which made him indifferent to outward appearances, for he displayed an almost Carlylean disregard for sartorial adornments. Literature was to him as food, and poetry a kind of higher sustenance. His taste in this regard was of the finest, and the range of his reading the widest. To hear him read or recite some fine passage was to listen to something charged with the deepest feeling, musically and rhythmically chanted. I seem to hear now the tones, tender, and almost tearful, in which he once read to us Browning's beautiful poem "Evelyn Hope." He was himself, too, a poet, as his only published volume, entitled "Fifty Sonnets," is ample evidence. Therein, in gem-like forms—for he was a master of form—you have expressed the whole nature of the man in the most honest and genuine way, his passionate love for nature, along with his other loves—literary and artistic—with a certain tender, brooding sombreness pervading all. The gentleness of his disposition, and his craving for sympathy, are most truthfully recognisable in the sonnet, "To My Friends":

Friends, lovers all! In this sad company
Of mountainous thoughts, tumbled and huge and gaunt,
Where peak to peak gives answer taunt for taunt,
And to hoarse torrents torrents hoarse reply—
What cheer, what solace for my soul have I
Save in the thought of you? Sweeter than chant
Of wandering bee, or scent of moorland plant,
Its fragrance floats my wearied spirit by.

Mounts higher evermore the path austere,
 Which leads to truth, or to some dreadful bourne
 Of icy death o'er mist and cloud that shines;
 But still from crags and snows I turn and turn,
 And your belovéd voices strain to hear
 Above the wailing of the storm-rocked pines.

I am not disposed, in this slight sketch, to review the literary work of my friend, but, as I turn over the pages of his little book, and read, as I have often read before, these songs of a wanderer, short "swallow-flights" that often "dip their wings in tears," I am more impressed than ever with the sense of a pervading magic and grace, native and original to the author. Making due allowance for the attractiveness which comes from personal knowledge and association, I cannot help thinking that they have, within their limits, that quality of all true art, the loveliness which grows with increasing familiarity. To those who knew him the subjects are characteristically suggestive. Among flowers it is now a snowdrop of his native land; again a gentian from the Alps, or a forget-me-not from Scandinavia, from which the inspiration comes, producing each a flower of verse in the poet's mind. Among landscapes the thought finds birth as he paces the Cheshire Highlands in the wintry time, passing from that "lone hostel," "The Cat and Fiddle," down the defile known as Goyt's Clough, or as he basks in the sunshine on the Sannox shore in Arran, of which he says:

Not more serenely 'neath the southern pine,
 White glistening beaches meet blue ocean's kiss;
 No soft Italian strand more fair than this—
 Not Shelley's Spezzia, nor the shore divine,
 Where Virgil sleeps in cypress-darken'd shrine.

But of the more distant sources it was, at this time, in Norway, with its fields and fiords, its woods and streams, and craggy mountain heights, with cataracts falling from the

steep, that the poet found his finest affinity. He was a pilgrim at the shrine of art, too, and so in view of the "Love and Life" of Watts, and the "Autumn Leaves" of Millais, it was a labour of love to interpret musically the painter's message, as it came to himself. Among the hymns of praise in honour of his literary gods, there is a memorial sonnet on Emerson, which one turns to now with peculiar interest :

Beautiful soul! that with calm steadfast eyes
 Surveyed'st the world of nature and of men,
 And of that other world beyond our ken—
 The home of spirit and its mysteries—
 Had'st glimpses fine and thoughts serene and wise;
 Sadly we ask, now thou art gone : O when
 Will such a star shine on our path again,
 O'er our dark world so pure a splendour rise?
 We ask unthinking; such a light as thine
 Can never set, nor sink the grave beneath,
 But burns for ever in eternal day;
 And, looking down on man from heights divine,
 Bids him hope on, nor heed grim-towering death,
 But hold through waste and wild his heavenward way.

His prose contributions to the Club were numerous, and shine out conspicuously in the published "Transactions." His style was chaste, and he possessed a fine critical faculty, sympathetic yet austere, which was mainly exercised upon his favourite poets, among whom may be reckoned Matthew Arnold, Coleridge, Walter Savage Landor, Shelley, and Keats. In later days the object of his almost idolatrous worship was Dante. Many of his papers were reflections of his travelling experiences, for, while yet in bondage, whenever release was possible he was ever a wanderer. Among these, there is one on "Friends in Jotunheim,"—descriptive of life in a hut in the wilds of Norway, along with a company of students, and where he first met Drachmann, the poet, and Grieg, the musician, afterwards to

become his friends—which, though expressed in prose, reminds you, in the spirit of it, of Clough's "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich." Grieg was one of Tyrer's musical loves—for much love of music had he in his soul—and in verse he has discoursed of the influence upon him of the great musician. His almost rapturous delight at meeting him accidentally in that far-off place is thus given :

Of Drachmann I had not heard, though I was not long in making the discovery that he holds almost, if not quite, the foremost place among Danish poets ; but Grieg !—his music had haunted me with its weird cadences and exquisite melodies, melodies which seemed instinct with the spirit of the wild and lovely, the "true and tender" North. I had narrowly missed bringing a letter of introduction to him ; and here, amid the scenes which had inspired his genius, I was by the merest accident to meet him. Nothing could have been more brightly fortunate.

Among the papers which he read to us at the Club, before he began his wanderings, was one entitled "Leisure and Modern Life," in which he made his moan regarding the evil conditions of a city-environment, and put in his plea for increased liberty and the life contemplative. Says he :

Leisure, in my definition of it, is an outward condition of human life which does not interfere with its inward development ; rather which fosters it, and helps a man to live his real life. Many doubtless find their real life in action—on the field of battle, in travel and adventure ; some, it may be, even in the mill, the warehouse, and the bank. It is indeed hard to believe that the capacity for business, as we understand the word, can ever have been the highest natural gift and endowment of any human being. At any rate, many, perhaps most, of those whose energies have been drawn by necessity or circumstance into the fields of commerce and finance, do not lead their real lives there. Men who do not possess what Stevenson says are "quaintly but happily denominated private means," must perforce, under the existing state of things, give up the best part of their waking hours to some *Brotstudium*, which, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, means drudgery of some kind, and live in the poor residue

so much of their real life, the life for which they were born, as in the circumstances of the case it is in them to live. "That," says Lamb, "is the only true Time which a man can properly call his own, that which he has all to himself; the rest, though in some sense he may be said to live in it, is other people's Time, not his."

With what gusto, also, and as one in perfect sympathy, did he introduce into his plea those further words of the gentle Elia:

Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative. Will no kindly earthquake come and swallow up those accursed cotton mills? Take me that lumber of a desk there, and bowl it down—

As low as the fiends.

Though his nature was of the gentlest, our friend had strong convictions on matters outside literature, which he did not hesitate, when occasion needed, to express strongly. In politics he was an ardent and uncompromising Liberal, and now and again one would see his name appended to a newspaper letter, girding strongly, it might be, at Lord Salisbury or Mr. Chamberlain. When playfully rallied upon troubling the calm of his poetic soul with such vexatious questionings, the reply came sharp: "I have, as you know," said he, "very strong opinions on political questions; to these opinions I shall not only stick, but I shall express them whenever opportunity offers. A man may not have in him the making of a hero, but he is a poltroon if he is unwilling to identify himself (even at whatever personal cost), with what he holds to be right in the event of a great national crisis." One remembers, too, in this connection, how energetically, with voice and pen, he entered upon the crusade against Vivisection, along with Miss Frances Power Cobbe.

A devoted disciple of Matthew Arnold, steeped to the lips in his poetry, and with the Oxford influence on him withal,

it was in this way that, as a wanderer, one came to associate him with the mysterious scholar of Arnold's poem. After he left us, as I have said, through many countries did his footsteps stray during the years of his pilgrimage. Sometimes one would hear of him in Norway, or far Finland, again he would turn up in Switzerland or Spain, but it was in Italy that he seemed to find his most congenial roaming-ground. Wherever he went he made himself familiar with the language and literature of the people. Often one has thought of him as a solitary dreamer, perched on some lonely mountain height, or loitering in old cathedrals or picture galleries, an earnest and reverential student of ancient art and architecture. He was not an idle wanderer, either, for he was known in frequent correspondence with the *Manchester Guardian*, and from time to time he would send home contributions to the Club, which afterwards appeared in the *Manchester Quarterly*. In this way did we get from Madrid a careful study of the paintings of Velasquez, and from Italy many descriptions of Italian life and landscape, and notably among these, a dainty bit of word-painting, entitled "In an Italian Garden." Neither was he neglectful in correspondence with his friends. When this took letter form, he had a pretty custom of enclosing a suggestive flower by way of remembrance. In one epistle, dated from Syracuse, on the shores of the soft Sicilian isle, he says: "I am going to take a walk in the country, and will leave this letter open to put a flower inside before sending it," and therein did one find a purple anemone, as large as a garden pansy, and of a kind unknown in English fields. At other times it would be a blue gentian, gathered on an Alpine slope, a sprig of maiden-hair fern plucked at Herculaneum, a Florentine rose, a flower from the grave of Keats, or a bit of greenery gathered in the garden of a villa with memories about it

of Walter Savage Landor. Of a halcyon time in "soft Sicily," he tells how, "there is an almost animal delight in basking in the Southern sun, in gazing across the soft azure expanse of sea, and in looking up to the lovely heaven—the lofty sun-filled heaven of Syracuse."

His letters were always delightful, as the following extract from one, picked up hap-hazard from the rest, will serve to show. It was written "At the Sign of the Golden Hat, Sarnico, Lago d' Iseo, Italy":

On leaving Tremezzo I went to Milan, the second in point of population of Italian cities, but with very few characteristic Italian features. The Duomo is impressive in a way; but externally it too much resembles an elaborate piece of confectionery to please the severe student of architecture, and in the interior—magnificently vast, certainly—the gaudiness and the sham strike me more forcibly than "the gloom, the glory," of which Tennyson speaks. The whole building is built in a sort of bastard Gothic; and to put the Cathedral of Milan in its true position, one has only to compare it with any really noble Gothic church, such as Chartres, or Rheims, or our own Lincoln or Ely. I climbed the roofs, like Tennyson, likewise the tower, but found the experience of looking downward from that awful height (with nothing apparently beneath but frail marble lace-work) too trying to leave much enjoyment for the prospect of the vast blue Lombard plain and the distant Alpine snows. There are objects of the highest interest in Milan to the lover of art; the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci, though now a mere wreck, is still wonderfully impressive, especially if one studies it in connection with the original drawing of the Head of Christ in the gallery of the Brera. But I got tired of Milan, as I do of all great cities, and was glad to go on to Bergamo. This is a charming little town, both for its position, with the blue mountains on the one hand, and on the other the vast glimmering expanse of the Lombard plain, and for its art treasures. But of these you will not care to hear. I should have liked Bergamo very much indeed had it not been for the church bells (Lombardy is the country of bells and belfries), which in that pious city begin ringing lustily at the merry hour of 4.30 a.m. to call the faithful to early mass. My inn was close to one of these cheerful institutions, and my sleep was a good deal broken thereby. Bells at a proper distance are very nice, even soothing—those that ring from these Lombard campaniles particularly so, but close at hand they are the very d—l.

This morning I travelled in a queer ramshackle little steamer from Lovere to this place. This Lake of Iseo is truly charming, and the morning being clear and crisp, almost cold, the mountains dappled with sun and shade, with their lower slopes grey with olives, a little white village or lofty campanile peeping out here and there on some high slope or rocky promontory, and the snows above all—arranged themselves with all that admirable picturesqueness which the traveller in Italy learns to expect as a matter of course. It is market-day here in Sarnico; and I found the inn full of merry folk eating their noon-day meal, and drinking the excellent red wine of the country. Poor Italy! One naturally laments the condition of the country; and yet the climate and the temperament of the people, and the cheapness of some excellent things, wine for instance, must needs make much amends.

The fair land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;

and the brightness and perfume of flowers is over all the land. Primroses, violets, periwinkle, oxalis, shed their beauty everywhere.

There is a sentence in this letter which indicates an impression—how obtained, I know not—that the present writer was lacking in a due appreciation of those works of ancient art so much sought for by our Scholar-Gipsy in his pilgrimages. More than once did he make reference to it. In a letter which came to me from a remote place in the Austrian Tyrol, and dated from a hostelry picturesquely placed at the foot of a great mountain, showing masses, and pinnacles and precipices of grey rock, with black pine forests climbing up its sides as high as pines can climb; after telling me that he is writing in the open air in front of his inn, with all this romantic grandeur piled up before him, he goes on to discourse upon the art treasures he has come upon in his travels, telling me of pictures, frescoes and statues he has seen, but with an evident misgiving that he is addressing a somewhat unsympathetic soul, for after mentioning the fact that he has come upon an altar-piece by Giorgione, which he declares to be one of the most beautiful pictures in the whole of Italy, he adds the some-

what depressing remark that he doesn't suppose I take any very keen interest in such things, and so passes on to other matters of more possible entertainment, such as mountains, pine forests, and wild flowers.

Oftenest in his communications did he make use of post-cards, and what wonderful post-cards they were! In a neat and diminutive, yet legible, handwriting, I know not how many hundreds of words he could crowd into the available space. Now and again, among them would come a message in verse. Dearest among his loitering places were those sacred to the memories of poets dead and gone. Here is one of these cards, which came from the shore of the Gulf of Spezzia, where Shelley was drowned:

The hills of ilex and of pine
Once more extend their shades divine;
Once more I gaze on the blue sea
And sunny shore of Lerici,
Of Lerici—whose beauty shines
In a dear poet's radiant lines,
And where the world is fair to-day
As when our Shelley roamed the bay.

Ah! poets come and poets go,
But Nature great no change doth know;
And thinking of this poet dear,
Of thee I think, and wish thee here.
Dear friend, who loved my poet, too,
With whom I link the thought of you,
What talks of poets should be ours
As on through dim-lit ilex bowers,
Or glimmering olives, we might rove,
And love the scenes he once did love,
Ah! sweet it were with thee t' explore
The sweetness of the sunny shore.

Of Matthew Arnold's great influence upon him I have already made mention. This, along with a craving for companionship in his solitude which frequently made itself

manifest, are evidenced in a card which is dated from Berne :

The clouds are on the Oberland,
The Jungfrau snows are faint and far,
But bright are those green fields at hand,
And through those fields comes down the Aar,
And from the blue twin lakes it comes.

These lines of Arnold's have been often coming to my lips almost unconsciously during the last two days when standing on the terraces of this charming old town of Berne. For the scene appeared to me just under the same conditions. But to-day—after a somewhat threatening forenoon, it is gloriously fine and perhaps when I look again towards the eternal snows, I shall see them in all their beauty. At any rate—

I wish, old friend, that you were by,
To smoke your pipe, or your cigar,
And let the pleasant moments fly,
Beside the green and rushing Aar,
Where chestnuts spread a grateful shade,
And the beer flows—an amber stream;
Or watch, beyond some long arcade,
Faint far-off Alpine summits gleam.

A melancholy interest attaches to the last of these post-cards. It is dated from Rimini, on the 23rd June of the present year, and tells how he has fallen into bad health, and of consequent home-sickness. "These countries are very fine," he says, "when one is in good health, but the health gone, all the charm seems to have gone, too." Five days later and his earthly pilgrimage was ended.

His last contribution to the Club papers was one entitled "In the Footsteps of Dante," and, in a previous communication, he had said that the greatest literary delight left to him in life was to study and follow in the footsteps of his beloved poet. At Rimini—associated with Dante's great poem in one tragic and memorable episode—he has found his last resting place. He lies in the cemetery there, by the shore of the Adriatic, and, thinking of the rest which

follows all our restlessness, one may say of him, in all tenderness,

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet,
Nothing comes to thee new or strange;
Sleep full of rest from head to feet,
Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

SONNETS.

BY ABRAHAM STANSFIELD.

CUTHBERT EVAN TYRER: POET & SCHOLAR.

I.

He died at Rimini, in the full prime
Of florid summer, when the roses bloom,
In a fair land, and in a cloudless clime,
And with the flowers he loved we decked his tomb.
Where scent of citron filled the sultry air,
And golden fruits were hanging from the bough,
With reverent hands we gently laid him there,
And with moist eyes, because we loved him so!
Nor will he, now, to earthly shrines repair;
Nor further seek in foreign lands to roam;
For in full summer, in his summer-prime,
His pilgrim feet turn towards his heavenly home:
Melodious Sprite! that "built the lofty rhyme";
But now he singeth in the quire sublime!

II.

He died at Rimini! where could he die,
A passionate lover of the Italian muse,
On this wide earth of ours, more fittingly ;
What poet would not die there, could he choose,
In that sweet land of sunshine and of song?—
The land of Virgil, and his glorious quire,
The land of Petrarch, and of Dante strong,
Where tuneful Tasso struck the sacred lyre—
Sons of the Nine, whose fame is ever young!
Haply among these Shades his spirit moves—
His yearning soul with Dante's may commune ;
Perchance he sees where, now, Francesca roves,
Amid the myrtles, 'neath the summer moon?
We know it not, but we shall know it soon!





CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

BY EDMUND MERCER.

“EVERY man,” it has been suggested, “has in his life the material for one good novel.” To this let us add that in France, in this respect far exceeding any other nation, every man who could hold a pen and spell seems to have been anxious to write that novel telling not only all he knew about himself, but all he imagined about his neighbours. To what else can we attribute the passion for pothooks that spread over the country in the seventeenth century like a species of literary measles, leaving its trace in the myriad autobiographies, *mémoires pour servir*, anecdotes real and imaginary, scandalous chronicles and the rest of the witty and wicked imaginings that the absence of a law of libel encouraged? Though a censor was impossible for more than twenty-four hours there existed some little restraint. The rapier was a ready arbiter, and customary withal. Every author with serious aspirations to length of days or the preservation of recognisable features had need to be a master of fence before dipping his pen. A scratch with a quill was often the prelude to one with a sword; there were some kinds of ink stains only effaceable by human blood. A fallacy it may be here said still upholden by many of the twentieth

century degenerate successors of the literary bravos of France. This inclination for the ink-pot was on the whole fortunate for French history and literature. The recklessness and ignorance of the unlettered bullies whom the perennial turmoil of Revolution and Civil War had scattered over the land were accountable for the destruction of considerable, and inconsiderable, print and manuscript, to say nothing of the speculations of that mysterious fraternity of the Index. Hence it is that, in the absence of better evidence, the moonings of some irresponsible babblers of the time have attained a value otherwise far beyond their merits. And these in the comparatively peaceful reigns of the two Louis Treize and Quatorze under the régime of that brace of clever Cardinals, Richelieu and Mazarin (England being busy physicking her Stuart troubles) were legion.

At the time Richelieu stepped into office, Master Savinien de Cyrano was four years old, having been born about 1620. The date is uncertain, as neither his Gascon nor his Metropolitan birth-place possesses the slightest record of this first momentous event in his life. It may be assumed that Bergerac in Périgord rather than Paris was his native town; to add one's birthplace to one's name being equivalent to a patent of nobility. Therefore, Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac: and Cyrano's father really was in a social degree a nobleman with a Château at Bergerac; reputed also to be better acquainted with his dogs than with his family. So Savinien was in time inconsiderately tumbled out of the arms of his nurse by a sire, "indifferent enough about the education of his children," into the house of the most convenient priest, after the fashion of the high nobility of Languedoc and Périgord. Young as he was he proved too much for his reverence who was a true Aristotelian ass, directing the

way to Parnassus up a *cul de sac* blocked by that blank wall of the mystic symbols, *si odor in pomo est formâ aut accidens*. Cyrano Junior complained of the inefficiency of the Master, the Master of the incorrigibility of the pupil. By way of making both parties agree the foolishly indifferent father parted them, removing his turbulent offspring to Paris, where he might learn everything the priest could not teach, most of which lore it were well for young Cyrano not to have learned. The only incident under the rule of the priest that bested him in after life was his introduction to his life-long friend, biographer, and literary executor, Henri Lebreton.

Cyrano the son—we hear but once more of the father after this period—seems to have been doomed to fall into the hands of the pedant; truly a most adverse fate for a man who hated useless straw-splitting and for whom an omelet was the same whether Plutarch's egg or Plutarch's chicken were the earlier in being. First, the aforesaid unnamed curé: next the notorious Principal of the College of Beauvais. Jean Grangier, famed over Paris for his erudition and eloquence, feared by his pupils for his castigatory efficiency, and scandalised everywhere for his ungovernable violence, avarice, and the peculiarity of his domestic arrangements—his serving woman, contrary to the usual order of things, presenting him with a family first and marrying him afterwards—was no match for his new disciple. His first and only effort at the physical exercise of his authority over Cyrano proved to him, by the irrefragable logic of muscular superiority, that Cyrano was a dangerous adversary to have on one's hands. Nor was his tongue less incapable than his ferule; a warfare of words invariably ending in a laugh at the master's cost. Cyrano, the master's master, with so great liberty, is said—as one might expect from the super-amorous imagination

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of the time—to have indulged in licentiousness of various kinds to the age of nineteen. Vituperation is not, however, evidence, and the insinuations of Dassoucy erst-while friend of Cyrano, and other boon tavern Chanticleers replete with malice, may be dismissed without further consideration; “no case, damn the other side” True, in his dying confession sixteen years later, to his lovely and much respected cousin, the pious Madame Robineau Baroness of Neuville, he deplores his *libertinage*, as he phrases the offence, and the word has misled many critics who may be literary without being logical. His apologia was for the free thought in his writings, not for free love in his life; libertinism not of the body, but of the mind. What else could be expected of a man, who, idle by nature, had yet during the thirty-five years of a strong and active outdoor life, dipped into all philosophies and religions, learning therefrom what he could, but, as he admits, binding himself to none? Further, though swash-buckler in both his life and literary work, he was no tavern roysterer nor bully of the sponging-house; and fortunately so. His nose, too large to dip into a reasonable wine-cup, would else have caused the death of half the can-tossers in Paris, and it is moreover quite certain that many a holy father—quasi ascetic—would have starved to death on Cyrano’s full meals. Be this matter of licentiousness as it may, nothing of it has filtered into his writings, nor did it in the smallest degree damp what was in him a positive passion for mental work. His disgust for the formalism of Jean Grangier in no wise deterred him from outclassing his college mates in acquiring a huge store of miscellaneous knowledge; a careless, lightsome task to a mind greedy to know, quick to assimilate and strong to retain. He must learn, he must be busy, and yet there was that ridiculous Grangier in front of his eyes daily; he would

study him too. So he wrote his lively and long-forgotten comedy, *Le Pedant Joué*, with the thinly disguised Jean Grangier as the foolish hero, introducing dialect to the French stage for the first time, and in after years inciting by its public performance at the Hotel de Bourgogne, a certain actor, one Molière, to write comedies on his own account. Whatever opinion Grangier entertained of Cyrano's personal strength he was without doubt convinced of the formidableness of the wit and insolent boldness of this new Aristophanes when he saw the burlesque on himself played by his own scholars in his own academy.

Terminating his course at Beauvais when about eighteen, Cyrano, left to his own resources in a city of almost unchecked licentiousness, is said to have turned swashbuckler, if not a libertine; tossing his plumes and swaggering along the causeways, openly tweaking the nose of the law and snapping his fingers at the timid minions of order, till, after a six-month, the noise of it stirred even the dull sense of that most careless of fathers, who forthwith put down, as might be expected, a most ineffectual foot. Whereupon Providence, in the guise of Lebrét, now a moralist of five and twenty, appeared as intermediary with marked success. Cyrano's energies dammed in one course, flowed into another, and with his eagerness for knowledge still unimpaired he swashbuckled intellectually. Without guidance or plan or fixed idea of study, he ruffled it gallantly through the devious ways of any and every subject just as he happened to stumble into each: Moral Philosophy, Languages, Natural Science, Puns, and Poetry cheek by jowl. And the marvel of the man's temperament was that he extracted the marrow from everything, potted it neatly and shelved it in his curiously constructed mnemonic pantry whence, without the least muddle, he drew upon it at a thought. Chancing to hear of Gassendi, theologian, philosopher, mathematician, and

peripatetic encyclopædia of knowledge, nothing would serve our bravo but that he must become one of his disciples. And the manner of this was peculiarly Cyranian. The philosopher, just now the preceptor of the afterwards famous Chapelle, made it a hobby to give lessons also to Chapelle's friends, La Mothe La Vayer, Bernier, Molière and other young men in whom he recognised a leaning for learning. We can imagine Master Turbulence never troubling to ask the permission of Gassendi, but stalking into the school and demanding knowledge as it were a tavern drink, with an air so imperious and deliberately menacing that no one for the sake of peace dared oppose him. At first, it is obvious, he was tolerated rather than accepted; but his brilliance, searching enquiries, intellectual gluttony and miraculous memory soon proved to his fellows that he was more than worthy of a place beside them. Here, fate, anxious to repair her errors in Cyrano's earlier life, brought him into contact with another guide and friend, Tomaso Campanella who, seized by the Inquisition at Naples for the boldness of his *Civitas Solis*, had the unique fortune to find a way out of their *oubliettes* into the house of his friend Gassendi and the shelter of Cyrano's sword. It may have been Campanella's astuteness in gaol-breaking that first commended him to the sympathy of his new Gascon acquaintance; though both soon found they had more than astucity in common. We are not, therefore, surprised that Campanella's work (for which as well as its author, Cyrano, years later, expressed unbounded admiration) had so great an influence over the younger man as to suggest the form of the latter's *Histoire Comique des États et Empires du Soleil*. The form only, be it emphasised. Cyrano was no literary monkey; he imitated no author more than Scarron may be said to have imitated Virgil.

On the conclusion of his studies under Gassendi, Master Savinien was still legally an infant, notwithstanding his bulk, his stores of learning and his unique capacity for taking care of himself, which no amount of proceedings in Chancery could have improved upon. At nineteen he was a man in many ways, but we may properly assume that even a Methuselah with the medlar-ripe experience of several consecutive centuries, may yet be ignorant of many forms of guile. At all events Lebreton was not certain that Cyrano might not again tread the downward path. Fearing that a man of so few years might easily fall into the claws of the harpies of the Capital, the young moralist insisted, or rather, being the only man with any power over Cyrano's inclination, compelled him to join a Regiment of Guards; the apprenticeship of young nobility to the profession of the sword. As a Gascon need we say more than that his rapier was merely an additional muscle operating as familiarly as the Achillean tendon; and that he entered himself as Cadet in a company under the command of Mons. de Carbon Casteljalous, which none but a Gascon would have thought of joining. Were it not that the *Mémoires* of a real D'Artagnan have recently been discovered, readers of the elder Dumas might be forgiven for imagining Cyrano to be the prototype of that fictitious favourite. These were the days when a man scattered his soul about as though he were at a loss what to do with it. A stranger looks at you; a duel. He does not look at you; a duel all the same. In the former case it is insult; in the latter, contempt. Cyrano, like D'Artagnan, began his new career magnificently. He arrived yesterday; to-day his companions have dubbed him the Demon of Bravery. He answered the Gascon equivalent for the British schoolboy's introductory question, "Can you fight?" so emphatically, that in a few

days he had left his particular scratch on half the regiment. His nose, an unfortunate and unduly prominent feature, stretched over Paris like a triumphal arch after it had killed ten men whose indiscretion exceeded their skill in fence. It was Cyrano's great weakness, his vulnerable point, the only portion of his flesh, projecting from his face like a cantilever, that was ever within reach of his adversary's weapon. Hence it "was notch'd and scotch'd like a carbonado," and some skilful Euclid of the foil—it was probably his last act—had neatly bisected the end. Just now a glance at it drew his sword from the scabbard always to his opponent's discomfiture, occasionally to the further disfigurement of the cause of quarrel which acquired a new cicatrice. The sullied honour of his proboscis could at present be cleansed only with blood. Later in life, when he had established a reputation for putting more button-holes in a pourpoint than the tailor intended everyone found Cyrano's nose exceedingly appropriate, and, though for a stranger to be too attentive was still an offence, he had an opportunity for apology. Cyrano was not ashamed of his eagle beak. After the manner of the tailless fox in the fable he would set a new fashion upon his particular disfigurement. He informed the inhabitants of the Moon (as he reports in his *Histoire Comique ou Voyage dans La Lune*), who had come to the conclusion on his sudden appearance among them that he was a new kind of featherless bird, that on earth a man was judged by the size of his nose; "a great nose is the sign of a great man," he says, "intelligent, courteous, affable, generous, brave and witty" and states further that men with small snub or camus noses were trained as eunuchs, and as the elephant is to the other quadrupeds so is he to mankind. Except for this audacious feature let us say here Cyrano was really a pretty man, with a magnificent

presence, always neatly dressed and a calm and rather melancholy nobility of facial expression that betrayed nothing of the bravo. He wore a long and fine moustache and some two or three of his contemporaries agree in telling us, his delicate black eyebrows and the alternating fire and surpassing sweetness of his dark almond-shaped eyes would have added to the beauty of any woman.

The regiment of Guards, having satisfied its curiosity as to its new recruit's pugnacity and having unanimously admitted his nasal delicacy and proportion, permitted him to acquire some knowledge of his new duties. Into this fresh fount of learning he plunged with his customary vigour, albeit he was not uninterrupted. True, he never again, so it is said with one exception, fought a duel as principal; but this was the age when seconds, and thirds and fourths if desired, had a little rapier exercise on their own account just to counteract the early morning yawns. Cyrano ready, indeed anxious, to oblige his numerous friends, accompanied them on short strolls at dawn to a meeting with other gentlemen with a view to quiet sword-play; in which it was noted that each gentleman who played with our spadassin invariably met with an accident more or less serious. Of these matters Cyrano, in his *Lettres Diverses* published some eight years later says, "I am incessantly working at *tierce* and *quarte*. I should have lost all knowledge of paper had cartels been written on aught else. Truly you are in the wrong to call me now the first of men for I assure you that for the last few weeks I am everybody's second."

We must take this ignorance of paper as less than the truth. Like Rabelais before him in those antepandial quarterhours, unobtrusively and without priggishness he spent the waiting minutes in the guard-house reading or writing with as little distraction as if he were in a study.

Ancora imparo, he might have said with Michel-Angelo, had he known the phrase. But this was soon exchanged for the real business of war. The Campaign in Flanders was begun, and in 1639, when he had opened the vista of his twentieth year, he lay with his regiment before Mouzon where he was wounded in the chest by a musket-ball. The town yielded, and the army moved on Arras early in 1640. Cyrano not yet recovered from his wound must needs be in the fray. No Irishman at Donnybrook enjoyed a *melée* more than our Lieutenant Cyrano. Assault after assault saw his long sword flashing among the besieged, wounding and killing, side by side with his friends Major Lebret, De Montchemin, St. Gilles, De Bourgogne, De Brissailles, Zeddé, Chevagné, Cuigy, Cavoye and the rest of the dare-devils. Week after week found Cyrano still unwearied until the last assault on the town left him at the foot of the walls where he lay with a gash in his throat while the garrison surrendered the place.

The discomforts he suffered in this campaign, the recurring hemorrhage from his two great wounds, the hopelessness of attaining, despite his undaunted courage and his prowess with the sword, any eminence in the profession of arms through lack of other influence, and principally the love he had for letters, induced him to quit the service of Mars for that of Minerva. Weary of combats and wounds at twenty-one he entered into the quiet of intellectual life; and though henceforth laying down the sword for the pen as a profession, the heavier weapon was ever by his side for the service of his friends.

We have said the quiet of intellectual life; this, however, was as Cyrano imagined it. We can scarcely suppose that so belligerent a temper as his could constrain itself in the presence of controversy. A man who continued his studies within musket-shot of the enemy

whilst his regiment lay on its arms was not long in acquiring the art of quill-driving. Of course he began with verse; one of the few instances in his life when he condescended to follow a fashion set by others. He was not however a man for a sheep track and soon deviated into one of his own. His pen was too much of a battering ram for the delicate depicting of ladies' eyebrows; and he was not slow to notice this. His poems, in manuscript only, he so ruthlessly suppressed, that the only evidence we have that he wrote any, are the records of various contemporaries who had read them. What a noble example of courage! War, not love, was his passion; and in changing weapons, his physical audacity was merely transmuted into a like mental quality. "Is that an assertion of fact? Then I contradict you!" was very often his attitude in his new career, and his skill in intellectual thrust and parry was never a wit behind that of his arm.

Of his doings in the next four years we have no record, though we may surmise much. In 1645 *Le Pedant Joué* struts the boards for the first time in Paris too, with young Molière, no less, in a principal part. Whence this little sputter of fame? Were the actors of the Hotel de Bourgogne hard up for something fresh and snapped at the merest trifle? Or could it be that Cyrano's name was blazened abroad in Literature as in History? Of course we remember that Molière was somewhere below Cyrano in the class at Gassendi's, but had he sufficient influence as a subordinate of the company to bring this comedy to the performing point? Or sufficient love for Cyrano? The latter's first appearance in print was certainly not earlier than 1648; what had he been about from 1641? From his *Voyage dans la Lune*, of which more in its place, we are allowed to infer that he had been to England where he met Tristan L'Ermite; that he had been wrecked in Rome

through floating there in an empty purse, and indebted to a chance encounter with his cousin—or could he have meant uncle?—Cyrano for the means to return to Marseilles by way of Civita Vecchia, and that he had journeyed overland to Poland. It is said that he was one of the French authors in the suite of Louise-Marie of Gonzaga, accompanying her to the throne of her bridegroom King Ladislas Sigismund IV. to whom she had been married by proxy in Paris towards the close of 1645. If this be so, Cyrano could not possibly have quarrelled in the same winter of 1645 with Molière about the proprietary rights of the newly produced comedy. The latter fact is proved, whether his travels to the aforesaid countries be of a piece with those to the Moon and Sun or not. Molière stole from Cyrano, with a cool effrontery equal to Cyrano's own, passages and even scenes from this one comedy; and was not in fact beyond claiming for himself the entirety of the play written before Cyrano knew of our plagiarist's existence. Is this how it came to be represented? The success of Molière's cool excuse, "I take my material as I find it," morally unjustifiable in such a case as this, has extended even to purloining praise due to Cyrano. That famous phrase "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?" in *Les Fourberies de Scapin* was no more Molière's than it is mine. With the high-handedness of a Border reiver he lifted it from *Le Pedant* together with the whole scene in which it occurs verbatim; and stole the entire final intrigue bodily to adorn *L'Amour Médecin*. It need hardly be said that when he did these deeds Cyrano was safely dead. No doubt a close reading of Molière's comedies would reveal scattered through them the whole of Cyrano's only comedy; in these days of mysterious ciphers it may perhaps help us to prove that Cyrano wrote Molière's plays. Jestings apart,

Molière's thievery was a great though peculiar compliment to Cyrano's comic powers. Says Mr. Saintsbury, "*Le Pedant* furnished Molière with hints." "With hints," forsooth! Let us be bold and say "With a reputation."

Cyrano seems to have done considerable writing which, as the manner was, circulated in manuscript copies for years before being folded in print. Typography was costly. Cyrano, a Gascon, was naturally poor in pocket, and his absolute unswerving independence of spirit would brook no patron, therefore he remained unprinted for the nonce. Despite this, he was the best known, if not the wittiest wit in the Capital, and withal, when he chose, he was not far behind the cleverest philosophers. Among the sages of Paris of whom Descartes was the only one whose principles he followed punctiliously as we may read from his *Fragment de Physique* his opinion was always respected. Among the wits, the convivial songsters of *La Croix de Loraine*, where Chapelle invited his friends to float to Parnassus with Bacchus, he was feared rather than admired. Neither gourmand nor wine-bibber the tapsters made but little out of him; and less still had not his admiration for his convives' wit outrun his contempt for their manners. Those two cowardly wantons of poets, Dassoucy the satirist and Linière the burlesque writer, tried none of their pranks on him just now; his repartees—ah! his mouth was a hornet's nest when it was not a honeycomb; and bees had stings. Dassoucy forgot himself once, and remembered it for the rest of his life, of which more presently. As for Linière, he afforded Cyrano who patronised rather than fraternised with him, an opportunity for our swordman's greatest exploit with the rapier. The poet, richer in epigrams than in common sense, had perpetrated a witticism on some noble, whose only idea of retaliation was to make Linière

eat his own ears. Linière fled for safety to Cyrano's house, but there he found in close ambush, so close that they could not see him, some hundred or so of armed men, minions of the astute gentleman who had anticipated his place of refuge. The poet, diplomatic for once, found Cyrano at supper with his former fellow officers, de Bourgogne and Cuigy; and unblushingly informed him of the posse of assassins in wait for him, Cyrano, round his house near the Porte de Nesle. This was enough. Cyrano ordered a lantern, which Linière to his extreme terror was compelled to carry and lead the way, and invited his friends to see the play. Arrived on the spot he incontinently dashed into the mob, killed two with as many blows, wounded seven, and then someone, recognising his nose stretching into the gloom, shouted his name, and the rout was complete, the ninety-one remaining bravos having fled into the night. De Bourgogne at once gave him the name of the Intrepid and took pains to spread the exploit abroad. The Maréchal de Gassion who loved men of wit and bravery, because he confessed to both qualities in himself, sent for De Bourgogne, Cuigy and Cyrano, and the marvellous tale he had heard received such confirmation that he forthwith offered Cyrano a post as his companion. Again Cyrano's love of liberty prevailed and the offer was politely but obstinately refused. Moreover he preferred the quiet of his study and the serious society of his more solemn friends Lebreton and the rest, to the gaiety of the Court. Yet, strange mixture!—he was exercising himself in punning, in equivoque, in quips and quibbles and other trivialities in which the brilliancy of the thing said superseded its meaning and sense. Being recognised as a master in these curious arts he began a series of occasional Letters, satirical, humorous, descriptive, chiefly to or on literary men of his time, arising generally out of some small

matter of difference of opinion and signed variously De Cyrano, Cyrano De Bergerac, M. de Bergerac Cyrano, M. de Cyrano Bergerac. They delighted everyone, but those to or upon whom they were indited when they appeared in book form in 1648. Scarron satirised the variety of signatures in his new comedy, *Don Japhet d' Arménie* :

"A man we may call Don Japhet Pascal
Or Pascal Japhet, for it barely will matter
If Pascal be former or Pascal be latter."

Cyrano replied with an open letter addressed to Scarron in which he called the little waspish paralytic, "a seedling planted in the porch of the Temple of Death." In bad taste assuredly, but extremely effective, as it closed Scarron's mouth on Cyrano's affairs; and he had nothing to say, openly indeed, even when Cyrano retired from the Society of the Fronde in a cloud of ink like a cuttle-fish. Politics interested him little and he, trailing his sword and curling his moustache, drifted into the Fronde casually in company with Dassoucy, and Linière and other poets of the Pont Neuf school, who, with Scarron at their head, were attracted by the opportunities for satiric burlesque on Mazarin that the Fronde offered and encouraged. After a verse or two bitter enough, he discovered the real objects of this Society against the Cardinal, and lost no time in writing one of his most satiric letters, apologetic to the minister but scathingly denunciatory of the Frondeurs. One accused him of apostasy, another styled him Prime Minister of the Blazing Kingdom, a third doubted his conversion, a fourth his sanity; but they spoke in whispers, and did not gaze too intently upon this man of Mazarin whose sword could so effectually reinforce his pen. Scarron, most mercilessly pilloried in this letter, dared, no more than the rest of the school, raise the gauntlet thrown down by this new champion of the Cardinal. Cyrano, disgusted with burlesque turned to the other extreme and began his

Agrippine, a tragedy in verse. Whilst engaged on this his friends, sorry to see him scattering his wits about in so indefinite and unsatisfactory a manner, persuaded him to forego something of his vaunted liberty and place himself under some patron at Court. It was with considerable repugnance that he submitted himself to the kindness of the Duc D' Arpajon whom he chose perhaps from his having been his commanding officer thirteen years before at Mouzon and Arras. As may be expected this patron was a patron for no longer than a year. Fate was against Cyrano's settlement in life and she prepared a peculiar trick for his undoing. In this year of 1653 he gathered together in one volume his *Lettres Diverses*, his *Juvenalia*, and his tragedy, and dedicated them to the Duke, who, being a man of war, was pleased to think himself likewise a man of letters. Cyrano's unfortunate tragedy was the fly in the amber of his satisfaction. To begin with, Corneille, no less, appropriated wholesale, lines, thoughts, expressions and even entire characters; whereupon Cyrano wrote two open Letters against a pillager of thoughts known as Beaulieu—alias Corneille. "What offends me most," wrote the aggrieved author, "(for you know I have a mind intolerant of wrong and a strong inclination to distributive justice) is to see that he attributes to his unworthy imagination the good services of his memory and thinks himself the father of a thousand noble conceptions of which he is only the midwife." Following Corneille he had differences as to the representation of one of the characters with Montfleury, the greatest—or rather fattest—actor in France, the heavy father literally. Cyrano told him he was not an actor, merely an obstruction in the bowels of nature, and ordered enforced "resting"—the stage term I think—for one month. A few nights afterwards Cyrano found him on the stage contrary to orders.

Striding towards him Cyrano drew his sword, stopped the play until Montfleury, by this time a huge blanc-mange, threatened with the loss of his ears, apologised in the humblest fashion and retired, Cyrano characteristically informing the audience, "because the rascal is too big to be thrashed entirely in twenty-four hours, he is as proud as a peacock." Finally La Monnoye in his *Menagiana* tells us that after representation of the tragedy in 1654 the rumour ran as to some expressions in it savouring of atheism. Whereupon certain bourgeois citizens of little wit—whose feeding had befogged even that little—attended the theatre expressly to discover these dreadful utterings. They allowed all the real blasphemies of Sejanus (which, as a pagan, were part of his character), to pass by without comment, but when with uncommon force he shouted those dreadful words, "Frappons l'hostie!" "Ah, the wretch! the atheist!" croaked our would-be critics, "Hear how he blasphemes the Holy Sacrament!" With such a small thing did Fate damn this tragedy, style its author atheist, and induce his patron to decline further dedications. Perhaps the tragedy would have suffered in any event; it had no promise of success equal to that in *Le Pedant*, and was injured rather than otherwise by its passages of unrelieved declamatory energy strained to the verge of bombast. It, however, added to Cyrano's fame, invidiously, need we say. Dassoucy, that Anacreon of the wine-shop and Emperor of burlesque, thought the opportunity of fooling Cyrano too good to be foregone; but the blind spot in his brain was active and he lost sight of the prospect of retaliation by Cyrano. Blindly he plunged into quarrel with his early friend; who soon effected a complete and permanent cure of the satirist's mental myopia. By way of answer to Dassoucy's strictures Cyrano wrote a letter on critics attributing to their impotence for producing

good work their miserable manner of posing as Aristarchus and annihilating the work of their superiors, and stigmatising Dassoucy especially, as a silly little ape, an incarnate marionette, a cheese maggot. Dassoucy, with an acuteness no wit inferior to that of his opponent, rejoined in a novel and unexpected way. Giovanni Briocchi, the Italian Charlatan of the Pont Neuf, a villainous ill-mannered con-vive of Dassoucy possessed a fine ape which, at Dassoucy's suggestion, being dressed and trained with infinite patience, developed into a marvellous burlesque of the matamore of the period with particular resemblance to Cyrano, and in consequence it drew crowds to Briocchi's show. Here the lackey and his master could vent a laughter and spleen against the ape's original which discretion would elsewhere have stifled, and Briocchi began to make money. One day in the middle of the performance Cyrano turned up in all innocence, and at the sight of the apish bullyrag burlesque became tragedy. With the flat of his sword he began to clear the auditorium, some foolish few of the spectators drew on him but incontinently tumbled over one another in their zeal to get out of his way. The poor, silly ape sprang from the stage into the *melée* and regrettable to say, this was the only human life that was lost, how, we know not, except that Cyrano's sword was innocent. Briocchi brought process against Cyrano, but was unsuccessful. There the affair would have ended had not Dassoucy, its hitherto anonymous instigator, with a vanity exceeding his sense, published a circumstantial account of the *Great Combat of Cyrano de Bergerac with the Ape of Briocchi*, and immediately fled from Paris fearing the vengeance of his bellicose adversary. He was ignorant that the latter treated him merely with contemptuous indifference; but his own cowardice so worked upon his mind, that, even a quarter of a century after Cyrano's burial, he

confessed that his nightmares took the one shape of Cyrano with a drawn sword.

When Cyrano wrote his best work, *Voyage dans La Lune*, is only to be inferred from the facts we know. Together with his *Histoire des États et Empires du Soleil*, *Fragment de Physique*, and a large number of other manuscripts purloined by the minions of the Index during the last year of his life, it must have been practically complete by the summer of 1654 when that fatal billet of wood—by accident or malice—crashed on his head one night as he was leaving the house of his patron the Duc d'Arpajon. The origin of the book is obvious. Cyrano, the indefatigable, knew all the philosophies and theories of his day. The curiosity of the scientists was chiefly rife about the Moon and its habitability; therefore our author must have his fling. One malicious critic has observed that when he wrote it he had already the first quarter in his head. The probable story of its inception runs that one night Cyrano taking an after-dinner walk with friends in the fields remarked about the moon's brilliance. "I think," said he with a professorial air, "that the moon is a world like this, and that we serve it as moon." Being interrupted by a general laugh he added sarcastically, "also they may perhaps say mockingly in the moon that this is a habitable world." The laughter redoubled: and Cyrano promised his friends shortly some news of the satellite. It was in this vein that he conceived the intention of representing in a humorous manner those chimeras which some of his contemporaries had treated too gravely. To this he joined the plan of ridiculing the pedantry, the scholastic disputations of the age, and that deference to authorities so long the bane of science. It is almost certain that Rabelais gave him the idea of writing in a burlesque or outrageous manner, which served a double purpose. On the one hand

these scientific or pseudo-philosophic topics might be treated with a freedom from scholastic bonds and in a manner sufficiently amusing and agreeable to appeal, not only to the student (who could, of course, by way of excuse call it fiction), but to the man of the world on whom philosophy, as such, would have been wasted; on the other hand the author could throw in any number of ideas, extravagant or serious, without risk of injuring his reputation in case his views should prove erroneous or of shocking his readers. For the form of the work Cyrano was doubtless indebted to Lucian and to Bishop Godwin of Llandaff whose *Man in the Moon* written under the name of Dominico Gonzales, the flying Courier, appeared in a French version about 1638. Certainly the freedom permitted by this style of writing suited Cyrano, allowing him to indulge his own fancy for rhodomontade, personal satire and fantastic extravagance. *L'Histoire Comique des Etats et Empires du Soleil*, is, as might be expected, a natural sequence to his trip to the moon; to which however it is much inferior in interest and seems to have been intended mainly as an exposure of the vain and ridiculous pursuits in learning and science projected by extravagant schemers, who meant seriously. It somewhat follows the *Civitas Solis* of Campanella, though this is rather a political fiction after the type of Utopia than a scientific extravaganza. This work of Cyrano is remarkable if only for the light it throws on his profound sentiment for the beauties of Nature, a feeling rarely displayed by his predecessors or contemporaries, and unsuspected in such a man as himself. In a most delicate passage he observes, "Have you never noticed the sweet and subtle zephyr which is never absent from the heart of the forest? It is the breathing of the trees' speech and this little murmur of delicate sound with which they break

the silence of their solitude is really their language. But though the voice of the woods seems always the same it is so far different that each species of tree has its own tongue, so that the birch does not speak like the maple, nor the beech like the cherry."

Once upon a sick bed on which he was compelled to remain till his death fourteen months after, Cyrano's ill-wishers had a clear field. Invention exhausted itself in calumny against him. One said he was an atheist, another mad, a third blasphemous, a fourth that he had written abominable books; fables were bruited abroad as to his death, and Tallement des Réaux, that irresponsible anecdotist, speaks of him as insane. Cyrano, knowing he was dying and staunch to the last, spent his time in collecting, completing, and reviewing his manuscripts which Lebreton was to print after his death, which took place at the house of his cousin, Mons. de Cyrano, in September, 1655, a few weeks before his friend Tristan and his master Gassendi; and he was buried in a now forgotten tomb in the Church of the Convent of Les Filles de la Croix.

Once dead there came a change, if not in public opinion, at least in its expression. In life he passed for an atheist; every one read his works but would not admit it. After death he was dubbed—no one during his health dared advertise him so—a fool; and though no one read him it was the fashion to acknowledge an acquaintance with him. True his folly was qualified by his post-mortem critics; one would have it that he was a spiritual fool, another a sublime fool; according to this man he was, in his philosophic circle, a fool among geniuses, whilst an admirer reversed the terms and averred him to be a genius among fools. That he was something more than a mere buffoon of sword and pen, his contemporary reputation justifies. We cannot admit any claim that he

should be considered a genius, but one cannot doubt his learning, his wit, his literary skill ; a concise style, shewing little effort in his perfervidly imagined fictions, avoided anything wearisome in every subject he touched. His work, often affected, irregular, unequal, capricious, confused, was always interesting for its movement and invention, and invariably original. When he ventured upon burlesque his style was bizarre but one expects this. His audacity, eccentricity and independence of life appear in his works and critics outside his own language have been misled into the supposition that his writings contain nothing else. One indeed goes so far as to say, " If you would see how from the heroic to the burlesque every manner of falsifying nature meet and are united in a single man you have but to examine the foolish and fantastic work of Cyrano." But let us pause for a moment's consideration. His published works during his life and immediately after its close had an enormous circulation, judged by the standard of the time, and he was called " Illustrious." This may be merely fashion, but their better qualities set the taste for the semi or pseudo philosophic French Novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as those of Chevrier, Caylus, Besenval, Duclos ; besides instituting a predilection among readers for the sometime popular extravaganzas. Molière stole from him almost the whole of his only comedy ; Corneille cut his sole tragedy into sentences and scattered them about his own extensive domain ; one book served Swift as a prototype of Gulliver's *Voyage to Brobdingnag*, besides suggesting to Fontenelle his work on the *Plurality of Worlds*. From the same source Voltaire drew inspiration for his *Micromegas* ; and Montgolfier, the precursor of Santos-Dumont, made his first balloon and parachute on the principles invented and pretty fully described by Cyrano as the means whereby he

reached the moon. His *Lettres Diverses* placed him on a level in that department with Balzac and Voiture; the former by one critic being styled "an assassin of proverbs" and compared with Cyrano, "folks laugh at Cyrano's jests, but Balzac's hyperboles are pitied." In spite of gross errors of style and of taste, urging no doctrine, but merely representing a sowing of literary wild oats, his Moon and Sun Books were masterpieces in the seventeenth century though they cannot bear that title to-day. As for the accusation of atheism his saying, "reason alone is my queen," expressive of a wish to be as free in his thoughts as in his most indifferent actions, commits him to nothing; and the theft of his manuscripts and attempted wholesale destruction of edition after edition of his printed works by the Index are somewhat discounted by his burial in consecrated ground. He refutes the charge once only: "I know one thing that you do not, that is God, and one of the strongest arguments after those of faith which has convinced me of His verity is for me to have considered that without a high and sovereign beneficence reigning in this universe, you, feeble and sinning as you are, would not have lived so long unpunished."

Dying before attaining thirty-five his talents had no time to mature and the indiscrimination in his early education never led him to that self-criticism which, without acting as a solvent to his courage, might yet have curbed his reckless boastfulness of character and restrained the bitterness of his jesting tongue; two faults which have led to his being considered off-hand as an author not to be taken seriously, but merely an amusing figure in literary history and nothing more. This misunderstood and forgotten genius is in France, remembered practically by nothing more than Rostand's recent play and two words of Boileau:

The bold burlesque of Bergerac better pleases us,
Than Motin's Muse, which chills himself and freezes us.

Perhaps we shall not be far from the truth if we think him a really clever man full of caprice and imagination ; a genius of a sort living under conditions unfavourable to his recognition as philosopher, writer, and inventor ; and dying before his talent could measure its strength and realise the height to which it might attain. His was the age of patronage in literature. It was his misfortune to be pursepoor and to follow a career in letters with a character not in sympathy with the fashion of the time, and a freedom of soul incapable of sycophancy.

Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère ?

Poor Cyrano !





SOME MUSICAL AND OTHER IMPRESSIONS
OF A VISIT TO SICILY.

BY HENRY WATSON, MUS.D.



HURSDAY, March 7th, 1901, was a memorable day for two friends who set out on a journey to Southern Italy. One of the two had been over the ground many times; the other had not, so it was a memorable day for him.

Nothing could have been more disheartening than the start from Manchester, for it

rained heavily, was cold, dreary, and cheerless altogether. This, however, did not appear to affect the spirits of the two travellers, for were they not bound for sunnier climes and fairer scenes?

A "period of absolute rest" had been ordered by somebody, therefore it was unanimously agreed to follow the advice implicitly, and see what a dose of "dolce far niente" would do for them; in other words—what it was like to be idle. A diary was rashly decided upon, but this failed, and was declared to be an invention of the evil-one to try and make them work.

One was handy with both pen and pencil. His object was to delight his many friends at home by sending them lightning sketches done on menu and foreign post-cards, and now and then write a vivid description of some notable event, or classical scene "en passant"; the other one would occasionally try his 'prentice hand at some music, and used to jot down the quaint tunes he sometimes heard in out-of-the-way places—that is, when they could not be obtained in printed form, for his idleness became chronic. Thus, without much expenditure of energy, an interest in the sister arts was kept up.

You will not be wearied with details of the journey from Manchester to London, Folkstone, Paris, and Marseilles, where the travellers arrived on Saturday morning, March 9. There was nothing to chronicle of a special character, either musical or otherwise, if we except one very important factor, viz., the weather. They were most fortunate in this respect; all the rain-clouds were left behind and for nearly eight weeks they had not twenty-four hours' rain—they were not even privileged to see the phenomenal red rain, of which such marvellous accounts appeared in the English newspapers shortly afterwards. The red rain had fallen in Malta a few hours before the travellers arrived, on Monday evening, March 11th. This was to be their first halting place; just then, elaborate preparations were being made for the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York (now Prince and Princess of Wales). Arriving at the Grand Hotel, dinner was ordered; then a short stroll was taken, and soon after that they both retired to rest.

At breakfast next morning the Maltese *Daily Chronicle* was laid on the table. Being anxious to learn what was going forward in musical affairs, the advertisement columns were eagerly scanned, and to their delight they learned that Mascagni's "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" was to be performed

that evening at the Grand Opera House. This was just what was wished for.

It appeared that the previous evening had been what was termed a subscription night, to which subscribers only were admitted ; this night (Tuesday) was an open one. Reserved Stall tickets were purchased, price 2s. each ; at half-past eight the performance was to begin. In order to look round the interior of the beautiful building they went a little earlier ; it was large and commodious, with tiers of boxes from floor to ceiling. They do not appear to go in for half measures at the Malta Opera House, thought the musician, as he looked at the complete orchestra, which comprised forty-two players. The time announced to begin came, but where is the audience, for there were not more than twenty or thirty persons in the stalls, and only a few occupants in the lower boxes ; even these took little interest in the performance, for they jabbered loudly during the whole evening, apparently quite unconcerned as to what was going on on the stage. It was irritating beyond measure. There is some little satisfaction in knowing that we have not yet quite got to that pitch in England.

Now, coming to the performance itself : well, anticipation, as usual, surpassed the realisation. The Opera began. The band of forty-two players played as only a band of forty-two can when every one is determined to play their loudest. The hapless singers sang as only singers can when they try to be heard above such a babel of sounds—they had simply to yell to be heard at all. The prompter prompted as only a prompter can who has to give every cue to both soloists and chorus. Indeed, that prompter astonished the musician. Fortunately he did not attempt to sing, but contented himself with shouting, at the top of his voice, all the cues ; there was no difficulty in hearing him all over the house.

The principals would have been good if they could have been properly heard. The musician came to the conclusion that this terrible forcing and straining of the voice is at the root of that evil of evils—the vibrato. It is ever present with most of the cultivated Italian and French singers. Indeed, it seems to be, and to have been, a characteristic of the two countries, for a 16th century proverb thus describes the singing of the different nations, which, when translated, reads thus : * "The French pipe (that is, trill like a bird), the English carol, the Spaniards wail, the Germans howl, the Italians quaver like goats." So that this vibrato, which originally was intended as an ornament is now carried to excess, thereby tending to completely ruin the voice. One is sorry to say that this bad habit finds some favour even in our own country, to-day.

So far, the impressions of opera abroad were not favourable. In spite of this, however, the two friends determined to pay another visit to the opera on the following Friday evening, which was a benefit for the conductor. The price of admission, which was raised, would have been cheerfully paid twice over by two of the audience at least, if he, the conductor, had restrained his impetuous band and had sat on that irrepressible prompter, who was even more in evidence than on the former occasion. Verdi's "*La Forza del Destino*" was the opera.

The force of destiny compelled the two travellers to leave Malta that night soon after twelve o'clock, and while endeavouring to keep themselves awake until they were called to make their way to the quay, and go aboard the little steamboat "*Carola*," they fell to discussing the merits and demerits of the opera to which they had been listening that evening, in which it appeared that a not over-virtuous wife

* Original Latin "*Galli cantant, Angli jubilant, Hispani plangunt, Germani ululant, Itali caprizant.*"

had had inflicted upon her a torrent of abuse by a harsh, throaty baritone, the tirade not being redeemed by the slightest artistic effort on the part of the singer. Suffice it to say that half-an-hour of this in the 3rd Act made both painter and musician wish for the end, which came quickly enough in the 4th Act, for the wife died—poor thing—supposedly of a broken heart, but all the time there were two of the spectators, at least, who were convinced that that tragedy was hastened by the vile singing of the jealous husband. The further discussion, however, was abruptly brought to a close by the entrance of the hotel porter, who told them that it was time to be on the move, so they were soon wending their way to the boat, and in a few minutes more were fast asleep in their berths.

On awakening, the sun was shining brightly, but so quiet was the vessel that while debating as to whether they were moving or not, sleep again overtook them. The next matter for debate was a cup of tea and a biscuit, brought in by the steward.

Being roused at last, they went on deck, and were surprised and delighted at the magical sea over which they were gliding with an imperceptible and fairy-like movement. The vessel was coasting slowly along the Eastern shores of Sicily, a village here and there showing amidst the dark trees and grey mountains. Stately snow-capped Etna appeared in the distant North, "set as a jewel in the skies." The famous Plemyrrium Point was rounded, and shortly after the Great Harbour of Syracuse was entered. They were soon face to face with the commonplaces of life. The Custom House formalities were disposed of, and a short drive brought them to the Villa Polita, which was to be their next place of rest.

Nothing of musical interest had occurred since leaving Malta. To while away the time until dinner, they strolled

into the garden. The painter's description of which is worth reproducing. He calls it a Pleasaunce, which, as it appeared in March, would make one of our literary friends mad as the proverbial hare, or hatter, for even his prodigious memory would not be able to find sufficient quotable couplets to complete the floral attributes of the scene. On the 15th day of March there could be seen the variegated periwinkle in flower on the borders enclosing geraniums and heliotropes, with violas and primulas in many varieties. The nasturtiums are climbing, the phlox is edging the path; roses are blooming, the single and double stocks seem weathered and past their best, verbenas and lavender are in full blow, the almond and pepper trees are in fruit, the white and yellow iris is fragrant, cactus and orange flowers, daisies and marigold, the little pheasant eye and a small blue gentian are weeds beside the wall, which is crowned with grey-bearded wormwood, and the niches, which had once been the tombs of now long forgotten families, are filled with trailing and creeping plants pendulous over the great chasms of the Latomia Capuchini, those marvellous quarries where the captives of old wrought away their lives, and our lovely garden is beside the walk the warder took two thousand years ago, whence, looking down upon the prisoners, he could hurl missiles at the lazy without danger to himself, or care for the result, if he hit the diligent. But hark! What is that which attracts the attention of the musician? Within a few yards, just beyond the walls of this beautiful garden, stands an old convent. A short distance from the convent is a rough road, down the road a herd of sheep and goats are being driven, each animal having a bell of peculiar sound and shape. This bell is attached to a primitive carved wooden collar, which is fastened round the neck. The monotonous jangle, with its irregular rhythm, produced a most agreeable sensation.

It was still too early to return, so the walk was prolonged. Just then, in a field close by, two span of oxen were ploughing, driven by two men. By-and-bye, one of them began to sing what proved to be an old Sicilian ditty. At the end of each verse the other took up and continued, for a few bars, a sort of refrain. The musician was jotting down the tune when unfortunately the singers suddenly ceased. An excellent photograph of the scene was obtained, yet it is a matter for regret that they had not a phonograph with them as well as a camera. But night was coming on, and dinner-time was drawing near, so they had to retrace their steps.

Several pleasurable days were spent in and around Syracuse, which is particularly rich in objects of historic interest. Frequent visits were paid to the Great Greek Theatre, which in its palmy days was capable of holding upwards of 22,000 spectators; and that wonderful rock-conformation known as the Ear of Dionysius, with its marvellous echoes, where, from above, in a secluded cell, the faintest sound, even the tearing or crumpling of a piece of paper, is distinctly audible; the Roman Amphitheatre, the great Altar of Hiero, the greatest ever built, the solitary pillar in the Olympeion, the tombs of Timoleon and Archimedes, the statue, gardens and fountains of Arethusa, all were viewed with keen interest and pleasure.

It was feared that the visit to Syracuse would be barren in respect to music, for nothing of any moment occurred after the ploughman incident until the day before the two travellers had to leave. A drive to Fort Eulalie and Belvedere, six miles distant, was decided on, and a few hours were pleasantly spent there. Just as they were about to leave, attention was drawn to a little child of some three or four summers, who was standing in a doorway, singing, in a sweet childish voice, an old-time Sicilian lullaby, to the

words "Nana, Nini." The tune was hastily jotted down, and it was afterwards found that it was one which was commonly sung in churches by little children about Christmas time, and is known by the name of Gesu Bambino, or, the Child Jesus. One sometimes wonders if the composer of Henry 8th music ever heard this; the rhythm and some portions of the tune very much resemble one of the dances he has written, and memory plays sad tricks with composers of music now and then.

Here, and elsewhere, the musician would fain have given an illustration in musical notation, but owing to the limited space available, he is most reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea.

The shadows were lengthening ere the two friends reached Villa Polita that evening. An entry in the notebook of the painter describes the scene thus: "The Western heavens are suffused with pale gold, lemon yellow to wit, while the East is becoming cold and blue, darkening into the grayest purple of gathering night." Then follows this mysterious sentence: "What a wonderful flavour the last pipe of English tobacco has before dinner!!"

The next day, March 23rd, saw them start for, and arrive at, Taormina. From a musical standpoint, this was the Mecca of their journey. Here they acquired several good examples of Sicilian music and musical instruments. The Ancient Greek Theatre is, of course, the great attraction for the globe-trotter, but the painter and musician could find much to interest them there, and thither they would frequently wander. One would sit and sketch the ruins of a by-gone age; the other, in imagination, would hear sounds of the old Greek Hymn to Apollo, perhaps the very one discovered about nine years ago, engraved on marble at Delphi. The date of this particular composition is supposed to be about 250 years B.C. And

yet, what is it, after all? Simply a melody, sung to the accompaniment of flutes, and, perhaps, harps, with no attempt at what we now understand as musical harmony. Scales or modes of different intervals to what we are accustomed to now—rhythm, too, of a most tantalising nature, which was both danced and sung to. Indeed, one is apt to think that this Greek music will ever remain incomprehensible to modern ears, and what has just been heard is but a faint echo of a forgotten past.

Besides this, particular notice should be taken of the Sicilian folk-songs and tunes. Many of them, though of unknown age, will bear favourable comparison with much that is written and sung now-a-days. Indeed, some present-day composers appropriate them with as little compunction as Handel is said to have done, and apparently for the same reason—to save themselves the expenditure of fresh thought.

Having made a special study of the Folksongs, by this is meant the music only, of various countries, one is sometimes astonished to find what a wealth of melody there is in them. Nay, it is unlikely that these mines of music will ever be completely exhausted. A book of old Russian Folksongs reveals what may be considered as perhaps the source of many a modern musical thought, supposed to be the original idea of the composer. Perhaps it is a case of melody repeating itself, as history sometimes does.

National folksongs, it has been said, "are the intimate expression of the people, the storehouse of all we care most to know about them. Whatever has good in it to last, whether in tunes or words, is sure to have been committed by the people to their traditionary melodies and rhymes. To no people more so than to the Italians, for them to sing is part of their being. They sing instinctively. Yet we question if the introduction and diffusion of a more artificial

spirit is not quenching, in a measure, the art and voice of Italy." *

It is usually in the out-of-the-way places, not only in Italy, but in all countries, that the old tunes are most frequently preserved in all their primitive purity; and here, in this delightful spot, Taormina, the two travellers were most fortunate in hearing them sung and played in all their quaint beauty.

The musician will not soon forget his first musical evening there. It was after dinner, when the two friends adjourned to the little *Caffè Nuovo*. Here they entered a small room fitted on three sides with upholstered seats, on one of which lay a mandolin and two guitars. A small counter or bar occupied the fourth side of the room, behind which stood a few bottles of wine, and some others labelled "Scotch Whisky." There was no one in when they entered, but presently the proprietor made his appearance, and gave the painter a hearty welcome in Italian. The musician was introduced, and coffee, etc., was brought in. Shortly afterwards, three young men arrived, two of whom, after the usual greeting and a little gossip, took up the mandolin and one of the guitars. Presently the proprietor returned, and taking up the remaining guitar, the three instrumentalists played a strange weird prelude, which with the uncommon surroundings quite entranced the musician, for never before had he heard such strains. Yet, tho' it was only the music of a mandolin and two guitars, it might have been the music that enchanted the seven sleepers of old, so strange and soothing was the effect on the mind.

The last young man of the three already mentioned next sang a song. We were told he was no less than a cousin of one of the Sicilian princes, had an excellent baritone voice, and all his songs were given in good style and without the

* "The Folksongs of Italy," by Miss R. H. Busk.

least trace of the vibrato. One of his favourite songs was "Un Mazzetto di Sciuri," of which the painter made a transcript into English.

But the life and soul of the little party was the landlord's son, the mandolin player, Domenico Lo Giudice, generally abbreviated to "Nico," truly a musical artist, who had in him, as the painter said, that which no other man could communicate. Next, the proprietor himself sang a kind of humorous ditty, something after the style of our "Old King Cole," for at the end of each verse he imitated some musical instrument which was supposed to have been heard at the Fair of St. Andrae. It was capitally sung and was enjoyed immensely by the listeners. The tune and some of the words were jotted down, but it is ineffective when given with English words.

The entertainment finished soon after eleven o'clock. By the way, the audience on this particular evening comprised only two, or we should say three, persons, viz., the painter, musician and Domenico's mother, who listened most intently, though she must have heard the music hundreds of times before; she leaned with folded arms on the counter and listened as if for the first time. Some nights the gathering was larger, and on more than one occasion a Russian Princess favoured them with her company, which gave an air of nobility to the little audience. Whenever the Princess was present we were always sure to have a song called "Na Picciuttedda," a great favourite, evidently, with her.

During the stay at Taormina, the musician had several unsuccessful searches for old and curious service books. He tried hard to purchase a highly decorated, though somewhat decayed, 17th-century church organ, but failed to strike a bargain. He did succeed, however, in getting three Sicilian musical instruments. Hearing of a goatherd who

would no doubt part with some, for a consideration, they went to his house, and, after a little bargaining, the musician came away, the proud and happy owner of a genuine Sicilian pipe, a goat-bell with curiously-carved wooden collar, and a fine set of bagpipes. Not much difficulty was experienced in arranging for the purchase of the pipe and bell, but the bagpipe was evidently an old favourite, especially of the wife's, who was no doubt responsible for the decorative appendages. The wind-bag originally was very large; when the owner began to fill it, it reminded one of Mark Tapley's rattlesnake—"Swelling wisely afore our werry eyes," it assumed such large dimensions that we really began to wonder how we should convey it to Manchester, and what the Custom House officers would think of it, if it had to be turned out. Besides to make matters worse, it had the smooth skin outside, and the hair inside. Now, the musician wanted particularly to have one just the reverse, i.e., with the hair outside, like the Irishman's breeches. The old rhyme runs thus:

Paddy O'Flynn had no breeches to wear,
 So he skinned him a calf to make him a pair,
 With the hairy side out, and the fatty side in,
 Now who was so proud as Paddy O'Flynn.

Without more ado, as soon as our wishes were made known, the wily young shepherd sat down, and in a very short space of time turned the thing inside out, and reduced it, with the aid of a bit of string, to a more convenient size. Our goat-herd was a capital player on both flute and bagpipe, and even obliged by going some little distance away, across the valley, on the hillside, from which his dulcet notes, reverberating from the rocks around, produced a most pleasing effect; for Sicilian bagpipes, like the Scotch, are not exactly instruments for chamber music, and distance certainly lends enchantment to the sound.

What with the Greek Theatre, the Italian "free and easy," the church organ, and other musical instruments, the visit to Taormina was most instructive and profitable. But, alas! time flies even there, so they had to tear themselves away, fold their tents, like the Arabs, and silently steal away.

It was a quiet Sunday morning, March 31st, when they took train for Messina, where they arrived about noon. Naples was to be their next place of call, and as the boat did not sail from Messina until evening, the intervening time was spent in visiting the Cathedral and gazing at the glorious panorama of Southern Italy across the Straits. Being somewhat fatigued with the day's journey, they went aboard the steamer at five o'clock, and sailed at eight.

Stromboli was passed about midnight, and, as they say, was active. Nobody visiting Italy should miss this magnificent spectacle. To the musician it was particularly interesting, for on a former visit, the painter was so impressed with its terrible grandeur, that he wrote some verses while passing, describing the wondrous scene. On his return, the musician set the words to music, and was now particularly anxious to know if the setting did justice to the magnificence of the scene. Perhaps it did, and perhaps it didn't. However, before leaving England he registered a vow that he would see Stromboli either in or out of action. With this end in view they both retired to rest early that evening, though it would have been better to have stayed up till the usual hour, then they wouldn't have missed seeing Stromboli, which they most certainly did. The intention was to lay in their berths, keep awake for a short time, and get a view of the marvellous scene through the porthole. Someone appears to have blundered, for the berths they occupied were on the starboard, instead of the port, side of the ship. It was a great disappointment to the musician; if it had

been seen even in a dream it would have been something to talk about, but to go all the way to Italy and miss Stromboli was too bad. Both felt very much like Mark Twain when he slept all day and got up at sunset to watch the sun rise. The explanation came at last when the musician suddenly remembered that it was the first day of April and concluded that he had been made a fool of by Stromboli.

That morning Naples was reached, which we will not attempt to describe. A couple of hours spent in the wonderful museum, a drive in the city, an hour's walk through the principal streets, was all too short. Four o'clock saw them crossing the blue waters of the famous bay on their way to Sorrento, where they arrived shortly before six o'clock. At the charmingly situated Hotel Tramontana they were admirably cared for, for three pleasant weeks. Their rooms faced the bay; Vesuvius, with ever-changing aspect, was on the right; beautiful Capri, to the East, was on the left. Everything that one could desire was there—mosquitoes included. These pests seemed to take a special fancy to the musician, and led him a pretty dance by their nocturnal visitations. They left a very fine impression (not a musical one) on his forehead one night, but a few drops of the painter's whisky lotion (outward application only) proved efficacious.

But what about the musical impressions of Sorrento? Well, they were modern, and savoured strongly of the town rather than of the country. They saw the celebrated Tarantella danced by ten or twelve young men and maidens, and a few who had once been of tender years; they were dressed in variegated colours, and played the tambourines and castanets most spiritedly. It was all very novel and pleasing for a few evenings, but it soon began to pall. In the interval between the dances, popular Italian songs were

sung, accompanied by violins, mandolins, guitars, and a clarinet; they occasionally attempted a popular English song for the benefit of the English and American visitors present. The leader, Signor de Lizza, a good musician and capital violinist, had set one of the painter's songs, entitled *Adieu to Sorrento*," to music.

Returning to the Tarantella dance, an account of its origin may not be without interest. We learn that in some parts of Italy, and other places, there is to be found a venomous kind of large spider called the Tarantula. It was said that when anyone was bitten by this spider, the priest of the parish was obliged to play on a fiddle one of these Tarantellas, to which the wounded person danced violently, until quite exhausted; he was then bled and put to bed to sleep, after which it was said he awakened completely restored. Who would dare to say, then, that music had no curative properties. Leaving the Tarantella, some of the churches were visited, but being the season of Lent, nothing musical was heard worth noting.

Signor Tramontana, their genial host, very kindly sent them an invitation to a concert which was to be given in honour of Verdi. It was attended by the élite of Sorrento, and gave a good opportunity of hearing the Italian dilettanti. One item in the programme was a duet, played on two upright pianos, placed with their backs to the audience, a most extraordinary arrangement, which prevented anyone from seeing the performers.

Some excellent performances by a military band were given on Sunday afternoons in the public square, which were much appreciated by both towns-people and visitors.

One of the most popular songs of the day was called "*Carmela*." It was composed and dedicated to Signor Tramontana by Signor de Curtis. The song is worthy of translation into English, but "only those who have

attempted the translation of Italian songs know how far their efforts fall short of the original. Many of these songs are the expression of natural feeling, and therefore do not exclude the spontaneous utterance of sensations which spring eternal in the human breast, but which a more artificial state of society thinks it proper to conceal. It is a 'touch of nature' which is not without its charm, but the translator is restricted by the deficiency which has thus arisen in the language.* Hence, though it is well-nigh impossible to give a literal translation, it is quite possible (though very difficult to preserve the original rhythm) to present the sentiment in another language.

To return to the subject of the violent forcing of the voice, a habit so common in Italy, the strange thing is that it is generally more apparent where we should least expect it, namely, in the educated classes of society. We rarely found it with the untutored singer. The two men at the plough in Syracuse showed no trace of it; we have frequently listened to the songs of the women on shore as they hauled in the fishing nets, or as they were returning home in the boats, but it is not there. The peasants at work in the fields exhibited no signs of it. No! it is reserved for the cultivated and talented to present it as their form of impassioned utterance.

There is another curious embellishment which is neither objectionable nor disagreeable. We refer to the little grace-notes which are to be noticed in nearly all Italian airs. Technically speaking, they are acciaccaturas, or crushing notes. We find traces in the music of most Italian composers. Verdi, Donizetti, Rossini, Bellini, all make frequent use of the ornament. It is as familiar to them as the "snap" is in Scottish music to Scotchmen.

One other feature which impressed us forcibly was the

* "The Folksongs of Italy," by Miss R. H. Busk.

large number of church bells, both in Taormina and Sorrento. The former place had (we often thought) above its share, for what with the big ones, the little ones, the cracked ones, and the whole ones, there never seemed to be a moment's peace. Near the altar in one church in Taormina there was a ring of bells, eight in number, fastened to a hoop of iron, which was made to revolve; they were small bells, and no doubt would be used during some portion of the service. Curiously enough, a peal of bells was never heard, such as we are accustomed to hear in England. Some of these Italian church bells, it is said, do queer things at times. Most of them are consecrated and baptised. Now, the former seem to behave all right, but the latter often give a lot of trouble. Be that as it may, the bells exercise a great influence on all classes of the community.

As the time was drawing near for departure from this delightful place, both painter and musician felt a strong desire to do something to commemorate this memorable holiday. One evening, during a walk in the orange groves, a tune came into the musician's head, and after humming it to the painter, he asked him to write words to it. The latter said it could not be done; it was putting the cart before the horse. But it was done, eventually, and so the first verse was drafted. As a compromise, the painter suggested that the words of the second verse should be written before the music, which was done accordingly. The necessities of the situation required a third verse. How that was completed nobody knows; for the painter affirms that he had a hand in the music, and the musician declares that he had a go at the words. It is entitled "A Serenade," the scene being laid in that quiet Sorrento orange grove, and is supposed to be sung by an untutored Italian vocalist who

sings English remarkably well. It is addressed to his sleeping lady-love.

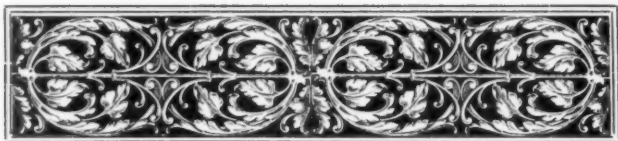
On more than one occasion the musician had noticed when in Italy how much higher was the pitch of the voice, and with what ease the high notes could be reached. Further consideration of the subject led him to explain to the painter this remarkable fact: that, under certain conditions, the warmer the climate, the higher the normal pitch of the voice, and vice versa. Sunny Italy is an easy first in the production of sopranos, tenors, and baritones; but snowy Russia supplies us with splendid bass voices, of which she is, and may well be, justly proud. Of course, one could name notable exceptions. A noteworthy illustration was afforded the musician when, some years ago, at the Comedy Theatre, Manchester, a Russian Opera Company performed Rubinstein's "Demon." Never before had a Manchester audience listened to such male voice singing; it was indeed a revelation to many. The sopranos and tenors of the company, both principals and chorus, were decidedly inferior. Very shortly afterwards, an Italian Opera Company paid the city a visit, when the order of things was exactly reversed. We might say that the more temperate climate of England seems to be most favourable to mezzo-sopranos, tenor robustos, and baritones.

We bid a reluctant adieu to Sorrento. On our way to Naples, a few hours are spent at Pompeii, and where the excavations are being carried on we pick up a curious piece of glass, then drive leisurely to Naples, and arrive there just in time to go aboard the P. and O. Steamer "Austral," which is bound for Gibraltar and London.

How grateful to hear English spoken once more, how pleasant to get English meals, and how delightful the musical evenings aboard—where you find some who could sing, but wouldn't; others who couldn't sing, but would.

Yet, notwithstanding these trifling drawbacks, the time passes all too fast. The Thames is reached early on Sunday morning, London at noon, Manchester at night, and here the "period of absolute rest" prescribed for the two friends comes to an end, and so, likewise, does this screed on "Some Musical and other Impressions of a Visit to Sicily."





THEODORE HOOK: AUTHOR & HUMOURIST.

BY MARK BAILEY.

THE sub-title of this paper must not be taken as imposing any restriction upon its scope, as in its course we shall have to regard Theodore Hook from many stand-points. He was something of a musician, a journalist, a Government official, and, some say, a tuft-hunter. It is right that we should bring to the consideration of his work a proper knowledge of the man himself, and I hope to do him no injustice in briefly summarising his career.

Theodore Edward Hook was the son of a musical composer, James Hook, who is credited with a large number of works in oratorio and operetta form, in addition to more than 2,000 songs. His first wife, the mother of Theodore, was a singularly gifted woman, an accomplished musician and the author of at least one drama, "The Double Disguise," which was produced at Drury Lane. It is certain that both parents contributed to the heritage of clever, if not brilliant, parts which we find in Theodore. Hook's only brother—seventeen or eighteen years his senior—was a man of considerable ability, and within about thirty years of his graduating at Oxford became Dean of Worcester. In addition to more serious essays in authorship, he wrote two novels, "Pen Owen" and "Percy Mallory," so similar in



Theodore E. Hook

style to the work of his younger brother that, not unnaturally, they are sometimes attributed to Theodore.

Dean Hook, in his early days, had been carefully trained under the beautiful influences of his mother, and his youthful tendencies to frivolity were thus curbed and checked. Theodore was not to be so fortunate. While yet a Harrow boy, his mother died, and he was deprived of the advantage of her wise counsel and loving guidance. His father was not a man of strong character. Easy-going and indulgent, young Theodore seems to have taken his father's measure most accurately. Hating school, where he is described as having been a dull boy at his books, he delighted his father by writing, composing, and singing songs. Hook senior, having lost the helpful collaboration of his wife in his musical compositions, was not slow to see that Theodore could be of infinite use to him in a similar way. Harrow saw him no more. Years later, however, doubtless constrained by the influence of his brother, Theodore matriculated at Oxford, but it has been said that his habit of liberally besprinkling his work with classical allusions only evidences the superficial quality of his learning.

His school and college life were enlivened by various juvenilities, treasured and recounted with gusto by his biographers, but not profitable for us to recall. The curious may find them set forth at length in R. H. Dalton Barham's "Life and Remains" of Hook—a book inspired by a great admiration for the subject, but showing a serious lack of perspective. We need not follow Barham through the recital of these follies. The notorious Berners Street hoax, perpetrated when Hook was about twenty-one years of age, may be taken as a type of the whole. The plea of youth does not excuse this scandalous and brutal business. Picture to yourself Hook, with a companion, sitting at a window opposite the house which he had singled out for this

exhibition of malicious, albeit impersonal, spite! These happenings show that there were serious defects in Hook's sense of humour.

Returning to earlier times, we find Hook at the age of fourteen writing songs and entertaining his father's friends by their performance. When sixteen he wrote a comic opera called "*The Soldier's Return: or What Can Beauty Do?*" The method of manufacture is described by Hook in "*Gilbert Gurney*":—"To work I went, bought three or four French vaudevilles, and filching an incident from each, made up my very effective drama." This secret of dramatic composition is not, I understand, unknown, even in these days of "new and original" plays. Produced at Drury Lane, in 1805, it was an immediate success. Its boyish impudence carried the audience out of their calm judgment.

This was the beginning of a period fraught with many temptations and great peril to a young fellow of Hook's temperament. He was the pet of the theatres, the idol of the green-rooms. Yet, in the midst of this whirl of excitement, his industry was remarkable. In the following year he brought out, at the Haymarket, a farce, "*Catch Him Who Can,*" written, it is said, to afford Mathews and Liston an opportunity of exhibiting their different styles in conjunction—a singular task to impose upon so young a man.

Up to the time of his matriculation, in 1810 (he was then twenty-two years old) he had produced nine performed pieces of one sort or another. In the year before he left Oxford was published his first novel, "*The Man of Sorrow,*" a farcical and impossible book which did not long survive.

In addition to such fame as accrued from his writings, his striking appearance and wonderful social gifts had brought him a name and position probably unique. The strongest proof that he had attained considerable social eminence is

in the fact that in 1812, at the age of twenty-four, he was offered, and accepted, the position of Accountant-General and Treasurer at the Mauritius. Undoubtedly, great influence was exerted to secure for this young man of gaiety and irresponsibility so important a post. This was the crowning success of his life, and the beginning of his downfall. Much of the blame attaching to his subsequent behaviour belongs to those unwise friends who obtained the appointment for him. It might have been foreseen that a brilliant young man, with a splendid official position, and a salary, with allowances, amounting to nearly £2,000 a year, would find himself flattered, courted and spoiled in the atmosphere of Colonial life. He describes in his journal the social life of the place. Operas, races, concerts, balls—private and official—and the rest! What wonder that his official duties were neglected, or performed in a perfunctory manner. To dismiss, in as few words as may be, this painful incident, it may be said that at the end of five years it was found that the contents of the Treasury chest did not tally with the accounts, although the latter were kept in such a fashion that it should not have been difficult to make them tally with anything! Hook's accuser was one of his subordinates, who shortly afterwards committed suicide.

Hook was arrested and deported. The voyage to England lasted for nine months—nine weary months of misery and privation. His spirit was not broken, however. His comment on Napoleon, whom he saw when the vessel touched at St. Helena, was: "Hum! Fatty, late Boney." Reaching Portsmouth in 1819, he was placed under arrest, but the Attorney-General reported that he had discovered no grounds for criminal prosecution, although Hook might be held civilly responsible. He was therefore set at liberty, and a scrutiny was commenced, which dragged on for nearly

five years. The claim, originally laid at £20,000, was finally decided against him at £12,000. Hook declared that this amount exceeded the actual deficiency by £3,000, admitting his moral obligation to the extent of £9,000. It is fair to say here that no proof was brought that Hook had taken one penny of the money. It had gone, and he was strictly responsible for the loss, nor did he repudiate that responsibility. Again arrested, in August, 1823, upon a judgment warrant, he was taken to a sponging-house, where he remained until April, 1824. His belongings when he reached London had consisted of a very scanty wardrobe and two gold mohurs.

Through all the strain and uncertainty of the scrutiny, he had worked manfully to maintain himself and to re-establish his position. Even in the sponging-house his pen was not idle. A man of more sensitive nature would probably have succumbed under such punishment. Amongst other recorded illustrations of the buoyancy of his spirits at the time is the description of his lodgings in the sponging-house: "Cheerful enough—barring the windows." But he suffered in health, and was removed from the sponging-house to the Rules of the King's Bench, where he enjoyed the benefit of partial liberty. He was finally discharged from custody in May, 1825. During his residence within the Rules, he writes in his diary: "August 12th, 1824. This is the birthday of King Geo. IV. God save my detaining creditor." Except that his goods were more than once subsequently seized and sold for the benefit of the Crown, this was the sad ending of that gigantic practical joke—the appointment of a practical joker to a position requiring almost every quality which he did not possess.

At the close of 1820, Hook assisted in founding, and became the editor of, the *John Bull* newspaper, the primary object of which was the destruction of Queen

Caroline. There was not much of the spirit of chivalry in Hook, who entered upon this work with enthusiasm. There can be no doubt that the newspaper exerted a great influence in the country, for Lockhart, in the *Quarterly Review*, says: "Undoubtedly the King personally was served in the most essential manner by this paper." So great was its success that Hook is said to have derived from it a total income of not less than £2,000 a year. Its political squibs, savage personalities, and brutal disregard of the feelings of "the other side," are now only interesting for the light they throw upon the journalistic manners of the time, and upon the character of our present subject.

The lack of chivalrous instinct in Hook is further painfully exemplified in his domestic arrangements. His five illegitimate children, with their mother, were left at his death unprovided for, his goods realising, on sale, £2,500, which sum, however, was claimed by the Crown as preferential creditor.

Lockhart blames Hook for not applying some part of his considerable earnings to the reduction of his indebtedness in respect of the unfortunate treasurership, while Barham argues that a payment on account would have been a fatal admission. But the admission of moral obligation he had already made, in terms. The position was a most singular one, and we should not regard too severely this neglect of what another man might have looked upon as a sacred duty.*

But a duty still more sacred was left unperformed. His oldest boy had obtained a cadetship in India, but the remaining children, with their mother, who had been a

* On this point Mr. Augustine Birrell writes (March, 1902): "Hook has been severely blamed for making no effort to reduce his indebtedness to the Crown; but if he thought the treatment he had received cleaned the slate, he can hardly be blamed."

pattern of steadfast devotion during the blackest days of Hook's life, were left to the cold provision of charity. A sum of about £3,000 was raised to assist them, and they drop out of history. It must be remembered that during the years of *John Bull's* prosperity, Hook was receiving large sums for his books, as much as £2,000, it is said being given for the first series of "Sayings and Doings." But his circle of aristocratic acquaintances was large, and his habits expensive. Gaming was one of his foibles. Nights spent in play were followed by days of feverish literary work, in order that the needful funds for renewed gambling might be provided. When staying for a month at Lord Canterbury's country house, a Mr. Shackell, employed on *John Bull*, attended weekly at a neighbouring inn to confer as to the conduct of the paper.

The fecundity of Hook's brain during the sixteen years following 1824 may be gathered from the fact that during this period he produced no less than 38 volumes. This in addition to editing and largely writing *John Bull*.

In 1836 he added to his literary responsibilities by accepting the editorship of *The New Monthly Magazine*, at a salary of £400 a year, plus payment for the articles and works of fiction which he wrote for its pages. Therein appeared "Gilbert Gurney," "Gurney Married," "Precepts and Practice," "Fathers and Sons," and other novels and tales. There are evident signs of able editing in the magazine, and many writers of note contribute, Douglas Jerrold and Thomas Hood amongst them. The latter followed Hook as editor in 1841.

On the 24th of August in that year Theodore Hook died, at the age of fifty-three. His dogged pertinacity, his cheerful bravery under circumstances of great hardship and cruel anxiety are worthy of all praise. It is to be deplored that some of his actions were not consistent with Dalton Bar-

ham's summary of his character—"generous, high-minded, and tender-hearted." If a man's work be significant of his character, what shall we say of what we read in Horne's "New Spirit of the Age":

His wit was generally malicious and his humour satirical. You could not help laughing, but you were generally ashamed of yourself for having laughed. The objects of his satire were seldom the vices and follies of mankind, but generally their misfortunes, manners, or unavoidable disadvantages. He never made fun of a lord. He would as soon have taken the King of Terrors pick-a-back as make fun of a lord. He was at the head of that unfortunately large class who think that a brilliant sally of wit, or fancy, at any cost of truth or feeling, is not only the best thing in society, but the best proof of sterling genius.

In agreement with Barham, Lockhart says:

He was humane, charitable, generous. We do not believe that his wit ever lost him a friend, and there was that about him which made it hard to be often in his society without regarding him with as much of fondness as admiration. That he was viewed with painful compassion also by those who at all penetrated the secrets of his life will now be readily believed.

On the other side, Edmund Yates, in a foot-note to his abridged edition of "The Life of Chas. Mathews, the Elder," writes:

One of the most originally gifted geniuses of his day, but one of the meanest characters that time has ever produced. Unscrupulous, dishonest, time-serving, a bully to the poor and a flunkey to the rich, content to fritter away his days as a buffoon to the aristocracy, he went to the grave unhonoured, unmourned, and uncared for.

I remember reading somewhere that while Hook was a tuft-hunter, he was not a toad-eater. There is a distinction, I believe, between a tuft-hunter and a toad-eater, but it is of too subtle a character to permit of its lengthened discussion here.

Is not the truth about this man somewhere in the middle
Z

region between the adulation of Barham and the vituperation of Yates? Possessing no claim to perfection of character, or regularity of life, we can only guess at, we cannot estimate, the effects upon a temperament such as his of the buffetings of fortune when she had once turned her back upon him. Who can tell what gnawing pain lay concealed beneath an outward aspect of gaiety and abandonment?

That he had generous moods is certain. That he tenderly cherished the memory of his mother is recorded. One of the latest entries in his diary is a memorandum of a sum of money sent to his father's widow. He was, at worst, no worse than his surroundings. Let us, then, to misquote Matthew Prior,

Be to his virtues very kind,
Be to his faults a little blind!

As a writer of novels Hook betrays no great power of dramatic construction. His early training as a dramatic author did not enable him to build a strong and convincing plot. Many of his characters are of a vulgar type, and in depicting them he does not always avoid being vulgar himself. Not that he can be charged with wilful coarseness. But his mind, as seen in the pages of his novels, was not touched by any illumination of nobility. The aristocratic friends with whom he spent so largely of his time and money, and who made much of him, after a judicious interval of neglect following upon his retirement, were not given to high aspiration. "High thinking" was as far removed from them as "plain living." They hunted, they dined, they drank, they gamed. That was the daily round.

One has written of Hook amidst a circle of this kind:

He made them laugh at good things, and forget themselves. He also made them drink. Thus are red herrings and anchovies used. Sad vision of a man of genius, assiduously pickling his prerogative

and selling his birthright for the hard and thankless servitude of pleasing idle hours and pampered vanities.

With a mind of unusual receptivity, and a vivid imagination, it follows inevitably that much of Hook's fiction is tinged with the spirit of his sordid and almost repulsive surroundings. "Gilbert Gurney" is claimed by some as his best novel. It was his "David Copperfield," and describes many of the madcap frolics of his earlier years. This is accomplished without too great an air of self-consciousness, an achievement much to the credit of a man who possessed that quality as a prime fault. There are serious passages in the book, but the attempts at philosophy are not profound. Much of the humour is sadly strained. Here is an example. Gurney, visiting Brighton races, stays for four day at one of the inns. Turtle soup is ordered for each day, but it daily becomes thinner, and on this being pointed out to the landlord, who was presumably a stage Frenchman, at least his broken English suggests that, replies :

"Ah! sare, I know dat. It is no fault of mine. Dare has been great run de turtle dis veek. I send to town for turtle—I tink enough of him—but no! Him last vell for dree days, but ven he come to de fourt, den I am obliged to stretch him out."

"Stretch out the turtle?" said I; "how?"

"Vy, I will dell you, Mr. Gorney," said the landlord; "me stretches him out vid a leettel vater!"

This is very poor fooling, but it will serve as an illustration of a process all too familiar to Hook himself. He also stretches out his fun "vid a leettel vater." He relates quite seriously an appetising story of a very distinguished officer,

Whose lady, having died in one of our Colonies, and expressed a wish to be buried in England, was accordingly deposited in a cask of rum for the purpose of transport home, but remained in her husband's

cellar even after his second marriage, the detention being occasioned by his expectation that the duty on the spirit in which the dear departed was preserved would shortly be either lowered or taken off altogether. "Strange as this may seem," he adds, "it is true!"

He does not tell us how the very distinguished officer succeeded in obtaining delivery from bond of the cask, with its contents of body—and spirit—without first going through the formality of paying the duty. In another place he speaks of "a place much hotter than Calcutta, from whose burn no traveller returns." All this is very harmless, but it is very weak.

In the matter of dialogue, Hook cannot be said to shine. Remembering what a brilliant reputation he had acquired as a table-wit, a king of conversationalists, it is pitiable to wade through page after page of dialogue leading nowhere, doing little or nothing to advance the story, and showing no relief of wit or humour. It has been said of Anthony Trollope that he went on eternally plapping, like water out of a tap. This is not undescriptive of Hook's method.

The same faults run through all his longer stories. In his portrayal of character you discover no fine analysis. You are not told of the genesis and development of personal attributes. The characters are helped on to the stage in sad disorder at their own helplessness. Of character, as Thackeray and Dickens knew it, Hook was largely ignorant. There is no living, compelling sympathy breathing amongst his gallery of manufactured lay figures. Even in Gurney, he has not succeeded in presenting a natural man. As a self-study, or self-drawing, if you prefer it, the presentation is neither personally nor typically satisfying.

But Hook could, on occasion, rise to better things, and write a dramatic scene, melodramatic, possibly, but not

lacking in power. Witness the closing scene in "Cousin William," where the seducer of William Terrington's mother on his way to keep an appointment with her son, is told that the son has discovered his mother's shame. He goes on, notwithstanding, and reaches the place of appointment only to find the dead body of the son, who had killed himself in an agony of hopeless grief. Another example of this side of Hook's talent is found in "Precepts and Practice," a collection of short stories, under the title of "Captain Grey." The end of this story is tragic, but told with judicious restraint. In the same book, pointing the unevenness of Hook's work, there appears a specimen of the least pardonable kind of word-spinning. It is a narration entitled "Widdlezig." Eighty-five pages are filled with tiresome sentences, culminating on the 75th page in a change of font and the declaration, in two sizes of caps, "You Are My Son!" Thereafter, either to hide or excuse his own diffuseness, the author obligingly recapitulates his story somewhat after the manner of the moral tale about the unwise traveller and the horse-shoe nail: "If Widdlezig's mother had not been devoted to her dog, Widdlezig would not have been left at Naples to be brought up by Mr. and Mrs. Von Doddle; if Mr. and Mrs. Von Doddle had not" done something or other something else would not have happened. And so on, until you are tired.

Having indicated something of my own views as to the value of Hook's fiction, I should like to refer, briefly, to the opinions of some of his biographers. Dalton Barham says:

That the author of "Sayings and Doings" stands in jeopardy of passing away rapidly from the memory of man cannot for a moment be believed. So long as a taste for the lighter works of fiction endures, "Maxwell," "Gilbert Gurney," etc., must ever take high place and precedence on our shelves.

And again:

In laying bare the hidden springs of human action he need fear comparison with none of his contemporaries.

A writer in the *Literary Gazette* says:

Sure are we that his memory will be hallowed by the esteem due to genius.

Lockhart writes:

Theodore Hook is, we apprehend, the only male novelist of his time—except Mr. Dickens—who has drawn portraits of contemporary English society destined for permanent existence. A selection from his too numerous volumes will go down with Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austin.

Quite another view presents itself when, writing only seventeen years later, Edmund Yates declares: "His novels are even now seldom read, and by the succeeding generation his name will scarcely be known!" I certainly cannot find any recent reprints of his novels.*

Hook's dramatic work was of a slight character. Much of its popularity was founded upon the personality of the man, and his reputation in society. Even the names of many of his productions are known only to those who grub in the by-ways of things dramatic. It is difficult to understand how such flimsy material acquired even a temporary vogue. "Tekeli, or the Siege of Mongratz," a melodrama, retained its place upon the provincial stage when most, if not all, of the rest had disappeared. It is rather dreary work searching amongst the dry bones of dead farces for

* Since this paper was written, Messrs. Chatto and Windus have published a volume entitled "The Choice Humorous Works of Theodore Hook." In reviewing this book, Mr. Augustine Birrell speaks of it as a "dreary, woe-begone, time-worn, smileless volume." Further on he adds: "Speaking generally, Hook is no longer readable." Mr. Walter Jerrold, writing of this book in the *Literary World*, says: "Hook's best is not such as to give him an enduring fame. . . . It may be doubted whether any re-issue of a selection from his works will galvanise his fame into any semblance of life."

some passage which lends itself to quotation. The preface to "Killing no Murder" is amusing in its description of Hook's fight with the Lord Chamberlain and his Reader of Plays. The Methodists had come in for some banter of a kind at which they would smile to-day. But the Reader was an interested party, and cut out parts of the farce.

One scene thus interdicted is printed at the end of the play, and is perhaps better than anything which the Reader's blue pencil had not challenged:

APOLLO: Yes—I ordained myself and preached in a field, but I couldn't get a living at it—

BUSKIN: You a preacher!—

APOLLO: Yes, and a teacher—now—I'll tell you how it was,—Over against my master's office—right opposite—lived an old dissenting gentleman—by trade a taylor, by calling a minister—dear man, he used to discourse delightfully to be sure—and he—he, Mr. Buskin—had a daughter—so to get favor in her eyes, I turned to and fell a preaching like anything myself.

BUSKIN: What a queer gig you must have looked in a pulpit—

APOLLO: A tub—as I hope to be saved, it was no better—but I minded not of little obstacles or persecutions—and the first day I mounted, I had need of patience, for some mischievous devil of a fellow tied a cracker to the tail of my coat, and if you had but seen how I jumped at every bounce of the gunpowder, you would have split your sinful sides with laughing—but I did it all for my dear Miss Hephzibah Buckram, I was called thereto by the spirit—

BUSKIN: Rather by the flesh—eh? Well, pray give me your polemical progress—

APOLLO: So I preached and I preached—la, how I did preach!—till at last I preached myself plump into the heart of my young saint—she was mild, amiable, and rich—her back was a little out of the right line, and moreover did she squint most damnably—but it was not the good things of outward vanity that I thirsted after—her—mind, Mr. Buskin—that was the thing; for bating a fondness for the bottle, blow me if I don't think her as delicate as a duchess—so one day—it was of a Sunday—after a sweet discourse from Mr. Buckram's 'prentice-boy—I came to the point.

BUSKIN: What—made her an offer?

APOLLO: I ventured to insinuate as much—I went into the parlor where she sat—la, I remember it as if it were but yesterday—she was

sitting out by the window—so—I—just—hummed and ha'd—looked a few unutterable things—she smiled, and so—we staid there about—half an hour, and at last I—came to the one soft question—do you love me—do you love me, dear Hephzibah, said I—I wish you had seen her two eyes—

BUSKIN: Consented, of course.

APOLLO: Like the most fashionablest miss amongst 'em—when I axed her, you know—she didn't stir—nor say a word—but out comed a couple of tears—out of her sparklers—for all the world like two pins heads—then after that she was all over red, and I waited a little longer, and she squeezed my hand; and turning up her eye—(for when one looked up t'other looked down)—says she to me, says she—Apollo, my dear—Apollo, my dear—says she, you are not what the world would call handsome, but there is a certain something about you that is inexpressibly delightful.

BUSKIN: Oh, I see the end—you married her.

APOLLO: No such thing—Courtships are not like farces, they don't end always with a wedding—her papa consented and the day was fixed.

BUSKIN: It "was a consummation devoutly to be wished."

APOLLO: Yes—but the more you wish the more you may; it never comed at all—it was of a Tuesday afternoon after I had been engaged in a discourse upon good works—that Mr. Buckram fixed the period of my happiness, and the Saturday was appointed.

BUSKIN: Well, and what hindered?

APOLLO: Why, on the Friday night, if you'll believe it—my intended bride was brought to bed of as fine a boy as ever you clapped your two eyes on top of—

BUSKIN: What, the methodist minister's virgin innocent.

APOLLO: It's as true as you stands there.

—(*Killing no Murder*, Act II, Scene 1.)

After his return from the Mauritius, Hook not only gave up writing plays, but went out of his way to exhibit a violent antipathy to the stage and all its belongings. This revulsion of feeling is strongly shown in his writings for *John Bull*. Perhaps he became conscious that the drama was not the best vehicle for him. Even his admirer, Dalton Barham, thinks that "Exchange no Robbery" might be revived, "were the gods to favour us again with such a pair as Terry and Liston!"

Of Hook's improvisations our knowledge is necessarily scanty. We have it on excellent authority that he possessed a most marvellous gift in this direction. Mrs. Mathews, in the life of her husband, Charles Mathews, tells of a dinner attended by Hook, where many of the guests were unknown to him. But he sang a verse personal to each guest, and his ignorance of their names and conditions was regarded as lending greater felicity to his humorous hits. Hook was then in his twentieth year.

As an example of the ease with which he dealt, in his improvisations, with unusual or difficult names, the following stanza is quoted relating to a young Dane who was once in company with Hook, and whose name was Rosenhagen :

Yet more of my muse is required,
 Alas ! but I fear she is done ;
 But no ! like a fiddler that's tired,
 I'll Rosen-agen, and go on !

His friend Sam Beazeley tells, perhaps maliciously, that in Hook's work-room, amongst the implements of his craft, were "Rhyming Dictionaries." These were probably part of the machinery for the manufacture of impromptus. Beazeley does not suggest this in terms, but the reference has an appearance of slyness.

The Ramsbottom Letters, which appeared in *John Bull*, afford a fair specimen of Hook's rather artificial humour. Here are half a dozen lines as a sample :

Travellers like us, who are mere birds of prey, have no time to waste, and therefore we determined to see all we could in each day. So we went to the great church, which is called Naughty Dam, where we saw a priest doing something at an altar. Mr. Fulmer begged me to observe the knave of the church, but I thought it too hard to call a man names in his own country.

Much better than this poor stuff are some of his epigrams.

The first of the two following is on "Mr. Milton, the Livery-Stable Keeper":

Two Miltons in separate ages were born,
The cleverer Milton 'tis clear we have got;
Tho' the other had talents the world to adorn,
This lives by his Mews, which the other could not!

The second administers a shrewd knock to Shelley:

Shelley styles his new poem "Prometheus Unbound,"
And 'tis like to remain so while time circles round;
For surely an age would be spent in the finding
A reader so weak as to pay for the binding!

Hook is said to have entertained a wholesome respect for the keen wit and ready tongue of George Colman the younger. Barham relates how Hook, "not without a spice of revenge," fathered upon Colman the following joke on the death of Mrs. Wall, the actress. On being informed of the event, Colman is made to say: "Well, I suppose by this time she is stuck all over with bills! That is the way they serve all the dead walls in London." Hook must have been in a generous mood when he gave away what our American friends would call "a superior article" of humour like that!

A capable punster—though inferior to Thomas Hood, and, in the finer branches of the art, to his friend R. H. Barham of Ingoldsby fame—Hook writes feebly, almost foolishly, on the subject of punning in the pages of *John Bull*.

Perhaps our ideas of humour are not those of Hook and his contemporaries. Or was humour in his day a scarce commodity, and prized accordingly? * Let us take refuge

* Mr. Birrell, in the article already referred to, remarks: "Forced spirits, ready mechanical humour, great verbal imagination, and the most genuine vulgarity, seasoned with a vein of real sarcasm, may be relied upon to produce a compound grateful to many contemporary palates, though not good for storage purposes."

in the pious belief that the best of Hook's humour, and the keenest of his wit, remain unrecorded!

In concluding this somewhat unmethodical sketch, may I quote, not without purpose, a few lines of Thackeray's appreciation of one who was of an older time, who was a wit, a humourist, and withal a man—Henry Fielding?

I cannot offer or hope to make a hero of Harry Fielding. Why hide his faults? Why not show him, like him, as he is? not robed in a marble toga, and draped and polished in a heroic attitude, but with inked ruffles, and claret stains on his tarnished lace coat, and on his manly face the marks of goodfellowship, of illness, of kindness, of care, and wine. Stained as you see him, and worn by care and dissipation, that man retains some of the most precious and splendid human qualities and endowments. He has an admirable, natural love of truth, the keenest, instinctive antipathy to hypocrisy, and the happiest satirical gift of laughing it to scorn. He is one of the manliest and kindest of human beings: in the midst of all his imperfections he respects female innocence and infantine tenderness. He could not be so brave, generous, truth-telling as he is, were he not infinitely merciful, pitiful and tender.

Theodore Hook possessed most of Fielding's faults, and many that Fielding had not. How far Fielding's virtues were his, obscured and choked by sordid and mean environment, we may not know, but let us in charity indulge the hope that in happier circumstances, much of the good which Thackeray so tenderly says of Fielding might also have been said of Theodore Hook.





SOME WOMEN OF SIR WALTER SCOTT'S NOVELS.

BY GEORGE SHONE.

IN estimating the value of the books one reads, especially the novels, one is compelled to place them in proportion to the way in which they stir the heart, as well as the way in which they touch the colder critical faculty.

The books we love are not those we admire most for their literary excellence, or their scientific accuracy, but those with which our inner consciousness has the closest sympathy, and which find a responsive chord in our own breasts. Some books are life-long friends, others are valued acquaintances, whilst others again you only wish to see and shake hands with occasionally. The novels of Sir Walter Scott have always been to me the closest of friends. It is sometimes difficult to discover why you have a liking for certain books and certain persons, and I have often questioned myself as to why I have so strong an affection for the Waverley Novels, an affection which by no means extends itself to their author's poetry.

I attribute it to the following reasons. Scott was my first great author. The romance with which his mind was permeated, and, indeed, saturated, gleams in every line, and

the glamour of chivalry, the clash of arms, the utterance of high and proud sentiments, the performance of deeds of valour, the skilful use of the supernatural, the wit, the humour, the generosity contained in the *Waverley* Novels have fascinated, and will continue to fascinate, the mind.

A critic of good reputation has said of him :

In creating types of actual human life, Scott is perhaps surpassed by Crabbe; he does not analyse character or delineate it in its depths, but exhibits the man rather by speech and action, yet if we look at the variety and richness of his gallery, at his command over pathos and terror, the laughter and the tears, at the many large interests besides those of romance which he realises to us, at the very way he paints the whole life of men, not their humours or passions alone, at his unfailing wholesomeness and freshness, like the sea and air and great elementary forces of nature, it may be pronounced a just estimate which, without trying to measure the space which separates these stars, places Scott second in our creative or imaginative literature to Shakespere.

In the words of such an author we may expect to find, and do find, those special creations of lovely and charming women which are found in the works of all really great men. The gentler sex have in the very nature of things played a great part in this world's history, and if it may be true that in all the quarrels which disturb this sublunary sphere we must seek the woman, so also is it true that at the bottom of all that is best in man, all his noblest aspirations, all his greatest achievements, we must also look for the woman. The poet has written his highest poetry, the artist has given the world his finest canvas, when woman has been the object of their art. And Scott is no exception, could be no exception, to this rule. It would be possible—nay, it is possible to find, in our literature, writers who are superior to him in portraying what may be called "the inmost enchanted fountain of the heart."

There are no passionate scenes between hero and heroine,

and but few definite declarations of love. We are not given those finer elements of the womanly nature into which Miss Austen leads us, but yet love is painted with dramatic effect, and its influence dominates and regulates all the actions and parts of the characters. For women, Scott had evidently a high regard. Their tenderness, their passive strength of character, their domestic virtues, and their constancy, receive from him full recognition. Even their coquetry he valued highly.

Oh! woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade,
By the light quivering of the aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow—
A ministering angel thou!

The female characters of the novels may be divided into three sections, or types:—(1) The great lady section, including Queens; (2) the young lady section; and (3) the serving woman section, including such characters as Meg Merrilies and Madge Wildfire.

It cannot be denied, however much we question the accuracy of Scott's historical facts, and however much we may condemn the anachronisms he introduces into his romances, that he had a supreme gift in the art of presenting men and women of historical eminence. The portraits may not be true in every detail; how could they be. Agincourt, as fought by Henry V., cannot be a photograph of the battle, but we get a far more vivid, and in all essentials true, account of that fight than if we had had that band of "special correspondents" so necessary to our armies of to-day. And so it is with Scott's portraits. Such a person as Mary, Queen of Scots, and such a romantic history, were just the things to draw from Sir Walter one of his

finest romances. Here she is, as given to us in *The Abbot* :

Her face, her form, have been so deeply impressed on the imagination that even at the distance of nearly three centuries it is unnecessary to remind the most ignorant and uninformed reader of the striking traits which characterise that remarkable countenance, which seems at once to combine our ideas of the majestic, the pleasing, and the brilliant, leaving us to doubt whether they express most happily the queen, the beauty, or the accomplished woman. . . . That brow, so truly open and regal; those eyebrows, so regularly graceful, which were saved from the charge of regular insipidity by the beautiful effect of the hazel eyes which they over-arched, and which seem to utter a thousand histories; the nose with all its Grecian precision of outline; the mouth, so well proportioned, so sweetly formed, as if designed to speak nothing but what was delightful to hear; the dimpled chin; the stately, swan-like neck, form a countenance the like of which we know not to have existed in any other character moving in that class of life.

So much for the physical presentment, and though the mental characteristics are but hinted at, yet we find in the tale as it proceeds Mary is acting in accordance with those suggestions. In striking contrast to Mary is the Lady of Lochleven, her gaoler, whose countenance, though still handsome, exhibited traits of discontent and peevish melancholy. Her natural pride and severity were aggravated by jealousy of Mary's position, and their mutual dislike, and their dispositions are well shown in their conversations, and in the actions to which those conversations led. Mary's regal dignity, her wit, her sarcasm, her wiliness, her gaiety, her charms, are all well drawn. Her queenly courage, and the composure with which she met her reverses, her folly in alienating many who would have been staunch friends, by the indulgence of her sharp and sarcastic wit, are all shown with those master strokes which can only be attained by men of the genius of Sir Walter Scott. The unhappy Lady Douglas, whose youthful fault gave Mary such a terr-

ible weapon in their encounters, commands admiration and respect for her honesty, her sincerity, and even her regard for the welfare of one whom she looked upon as a "Moabitish Queen." The private agonies of both Mary and Lady Douglas, created, as they were, by the imagination of the author, are yet true to each—the Queen's suffering finding vent in hysterical ebullitions, which are firmly suppressed; the lady's, in those earnest, emotional prayers which are wrung out of the needs of strong characters.

It was a fitting, and, perhaps, an intended, sequence that induced Scott to write his novel of "Kenilworth" after that of "The Abbott," for in it we have our own Queen Elizabeth depicted for us in the bold and creative manner of our author. That Elizabeth was a great and strong Queen, nobody can for a moment doubt.

Coming to the throne when England's prestige was at the lowest point, with her realm threatened by the mighty power of Spain, with religion unsettled, with trade deeply injured by unwise laws, and a disaffected people, she left it at her death a great power, united in its own borders and feared abroad. Her fleets had overcome Spain, her commerce was penetrating into every sea, religion was settled, the long hostility between Scotland and England had been directed into channels which have brought untold prosperity to both kingdoms, literature had sprung into glorious life and action, statesmanship had achieved some of its finest triumphs, and science and philosophy had given proof of those immense benefits which they were to confer on the world. Her subjects regarded her with enthusiastic loyalty, poets wrote about her, and soldiers and sailors found their courage and enterprise doubled by her appreciation.

Although we know her to have been a wise and farseeing ruler, keen in her judgment of men, never failing in her power of selection, diplomatic in her use of opportunities,

knowing well when to yield and when to be firm, yet we know her also to have been vain, erratic, and passionate even to cruelty, possessing in abundance that absolute spirit which had been so strongly exemplified in her father, Henry VIII. How, then, does Scot present her to us in "Kenilworth"? Though he does not attempt any word portrait of her, yet he conveys a vivid and life-like impression of our Virgin Queen.

She reins her horse with peculiar grace and dignity, and in her stately and noble carriage you saw the daughter of a hundred kings, she is a wise and jealous Princess—if she had been a man, none of her ancestors would have loved a good sword better—she had a system of balancing policy by marks of peculiar favour, she used great circumspection and economy in bestowing titles, she was dressed in a manner at once well suited to her height and to the dignity of her mien, which her conscious rank and long habits of authority had rendered in some degree too masculine to be seen to the best advantage in ordinary female wear; when in passion, her eyes sparkled as they were wont when the spirit of Henry VIII. mounted highest in his daughter. She had a great regard for the common people; always anxious that they should be properly considered. Her passion for Leicester was such that it needed all her queenly dignity and control to prevent her caressing his hair in public, and the storm of anger which takes possession of her when Leicester's duplicity is made known sounded in the ear of the astounded statesman like the last dread trumpet call that is to summon body and spirit to the judgment seat. In her reign letters were revived with great brilliancy, and her court was governed by a female whose sense of propriety was equal to her strength of mind, and she was no less distinguished for delicacy and refinement than her counsels for wisdom and fortitude. Her angry passions, which burst like the tempest, were quickly controlled, and her judgments were scarcely every marked by intemperance or injustice.

This is no unworthy portrait of a great Queen, and though it does not say all, yet what is said harmonises well with the portraits of Elizabeth given us by the serious historian.

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Another Queen whom Scott describes for us is Queen Caroline. He says :

With all the winning address of an elegant and, according to the times, an accomplished woman, Queen Caroline possessed the masculine soul of the other sex. She was proud by nature, and even her policy could not always temper her expressions of displeasure, although few were more ready at repairing any false step of this kind when her prudence came to the aid of her passions. She loved the real possession of power rather than the show of it, and whatever she did herself that was either wise or popular she always desired that the King should have full credit as well as the advantage of the measure, conscious that by adding to his respectability she was most likely to maintain her own. And so desirous was she to comply with all his tasks that, when threatened with the gout, she had repeatedly had recourse to checking the fit that she might be able to attend him in his walks.

Scott's chief aim in writing this novel was undoubtedly to give us the characters of Elizabeth and Leicester. The story of Amy Robsart, though real and terrible, was only used for that purpose. Of more interest, perhaps, are those characters which Scott really created. The three Queens he had read about, and had been able to form ideas as to their real characters, and whilst to infuse into them so true a semblance of speech and action required high talent, yet the creation of imaginary women of such nearness to truth that they live for us, required not only talent of the first order, but genius itself.

In this respect Scott did not reach the highest rank. Authors of inferior descriptive power have yet penetrated further into the heart of true woman, and have given us more definite and lovable creations. But what he has given us fails not in quality, but in degree. Of the adventures we have no example. No Becky Sharp was ever invented, or could have been invented, by him. There are no Lady Macbeths, but there is a Lady Ashton, whose in-

domitable will and unbending pride were sufficient not only to wreck the happiness of Ravenswood and her daughter Lucy, but to bring disgrace and irremediable misfortune on her own family. Her character has scarcely one redeeming trait, being worldly and selfish to the last degree, and yet we would rather have her than the sweeter, but weak and nebulous, character of her daughter. The Countess of Derby, in "Peveril of the Peak," has the same indomitable will, the same relentless pursuit of her object, but she is possessed of a loyalty which removes her far from selfishness, and the dignity with which she bears her misfortunes, the affection she entertains for her family and its connections, her solicitude for the welfare of Peveril and Alice Bridgnorth, give her a hold on your affection and fill you with a sympathy for her in her turbulent and unhappy surroundings.

The young ladies who form the heroines of the Waverley Novels are somewhat monotonous in character. They are all of them possessed of sweetness and firmness; they have all, whilst susceptible to the tender passion, and capable of giving way to its impetuous behests, reasoning powers which enable them to see the rights and wrongs of their position, and though they are willing to risk many things for their beloved, yet they arrive at their decision with a coolness of reason and logic which seems to me to belong to a more advanced period of life than eighteen or nineteen years of age.

At about that age Flora MacIvor was not only able to translate Italian poetry and the ruder verse of her Celtic forefathers, but she was also able to reject with firmness, and with a bewildering array of reasonable arguments, the eager and impulsive proposal of Waverley. Though however they may all be said to be on the same level, the heroines are one and all charming and beautiful women, of high character and excellence. Some, like Catherine

Seyton, may be more capricious or more mischievous than others, but Diana Vernon, Rose Bradwardine, Alice Bridgorth, Margaret Ramsey, Edith Bellenden, Mary Avenel, Minna and Brenda Troil might all belong to the same family, for they have all the same dispositions. Even Lucy Ashton varies only in being more placable to surrounding circumstances, but that might have been only because those circumstances proved more unbending in her case than in those of her sister-heroines.

But I think Diana Vernon deserves more than a passing word. The only girl amongst a family of hard hunting, hard drinking North of England squires, exposed to the plausible arguments and temptations of Rashleigh Osbaldistone, she yet managed to keep the purity of her character and the sweetness and justice of her disposition. The Di Vernons of to-day would certainly own a bicycle, if not a motor car; they would be cricketers, footballers, doctors, lawyers—anything, in fact that men would let them be, but if they were like the Di Vernon of "Rob Roy," they would still be the kind of woman that men trust and love, and, when possible, marry. Here is her portrait. Speaking of her first appearance, Frank Osbaldistone says:

It was a young lady, the loveliness of whose very striking features was enhanced by the animation of the chase, and the glow of exercise, mounted on a beautiful horse, jet black unless where he was flecked by spots of the snow-white foam which embossed his bridle. She wore, what was then somewhat unusual, a coat, vest and hat resembling those of a man, which fashion has since been called a riding-habit. . . . Her long black hair streamed on the breeze, having, in the hurry of the chase, escaped from the ribbon which bound it. . . . I had a full view of her uncommonly fine face and person, to which an inexpressible charm was added by the wild gaiety of the scene and the romance of her singular dress and unexpected appearance.

It says a good deal for Scott's width of view that he should dare to make a heroine of such an advanced young

woman at a time when the proprieties with regard to the sex were of such a rigid and unbending nature.

One of the best of Scott's creations is Rebecca, the Jewess, in "*Ivanhoe*." Her delineation approaches nearest to greatness (if, in fact, it is not altogether great) of any of his heroines. She is the heroine of the tale, notwithstanding that the Lady Rowena secures all the happiness:

Her form was exquisitely symmetrical. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which each arranged its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colours, embossed upon a purple ground, permitted to be visible—all these constituted a combination of loveliness which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her.

But it is not this description of her that makes Scott's creation great; it is the development of her mind and character. She is made to possess all the sombre, yet beautiful, poetic feeling of her race, and whilst centuries of contumely and scorn had given her that sadness of mind, the peculiar possession of the oppressed, she yet retained all the divine qualities of womanly gentleness, and her strong and unwavering faith in the stern God of her fathers was accompanied by a spirit of forgiveness and charity which shamed the so-called Christians by whom her race was plundered. Joined to an active gratitude she had a knowledge of medicine which enabled her to effectually succour *Ivanhoe* when seriously wounded, and her poetic description of the assault on *Front de Bœuf's* Castle is one of the finest and most dramatic passages in the whole of Scott's writings, whether verse or prose. With consummate art she is never anything but a beautiful Jewess, and her firmness in unmerited misfortune, her patient support of the

agonies of an unacknowledged and unrequited affection, her tender solicitude for her somewhat avaricious father, all combine to present a creature at once beautiful, gracious, courageous, and eminently sweet and attractive. In comparison with her, Rowena is a mere puppet, or she is like one of those unfortunate hands at whist, which are merely useful in swelling the number of your opponents tricks.

Another great creation is Jennie Deans, in "The Heart of Midlothian." She is the heroine round which circles like a maelstrom all the action of the drama. Her sister Effie is but the peg on which to hang the tale. Her fault, her imprisonment, her trial, her condemnation, are all but the occasion to show Jennie's devotion and sisterly love. Without the display of these qualities, the tale would have been commonplace; never would have been written, in fact; at least not by Scott. Her portrait is a distinct contrast to Rebecca's:

She was short, and rather too stoutly made for her size, had grey eyes, light-coloured hair, a round, good-humoured face, much tanned with the sun, and her only peculiar charm was an air of inexpressible serenity, which a good conscience, kind feelings, contented temper, and the regular discharge of all her duties, spread over her features.

The development of her character is left, like all the rest, to the progress of the tale, but her unpretentious character is yet strong enough to enable her to perform with tender care all, and more than all, of her daughterly and sisterly duties. Her journey to London, performed amidst perils of which our four-hour trains see no vestige; her quiet courage, the respectful persistence which gains for her the active and efficient help of the Duke of Argyle, her unassuming composure in the presence of Queen Caroline, her deep yet moderately-expressed joy at the pardon of her sister Effie, her common-sense wifely devotion to her husband, her

efficient management of her household, all seem to me to be expressive and typical of the best qualities of the Scotch character. We must have had, it is not too much to say we still have, many women like her, who have helped, and are helping, to build up those qualities in our men which will enable us to carry on the high destinies of the British nation. The versatility of Scott's genius appears in the character of Jennie Deans; that, having so many good qualities and virtues, we never think her "unco guid," or priggish, but are contented to take her for what she is—an affectionate daughter, a tender sister, and a loving and wifely friend and counsellor of her husband.

It would be as impossible as it is undesirable to mention the name of every woman in the Waverley novels, but yet we must not omit such ladies as Lady Peveril or Miss Margaret Bellenden in "Old Mortality." Lady Peveril, surrounded as she was by difficulties, serious in themselves, yet aggravated by the hot and injudicious temper of her husband, Sir Geoffrey, yet managed by unfailing patience and kindness to preserve the gallant knight from many dangers. Her motherly solicitude succeeded not only in retaining the friendship of Major Bridgnorth, but the custody of his daughter Alice, who, under her tender care, became one of those flowers of England of which we are justly proud.

In Miss Margaret Bellenden we have preserved an enthusiasm of loyalty which appears almost incredible to our less reverent age. At once the feudal mistress and the kind physician, she required from her people the same unquestioning obedience she was ready to pay her sovereign, and her horror of anything which savoured of reform, reveals an old world state of mind long gone to its everlasting rest.

Her character, simple and kindly, is much relieved by

her excessive reverence for the chamber in which His Most Sacred Majesty Charles II. had once had his disguise, and it lends a welcome touch of humour to the novel. Quite as strange to our generation is Mause Headrigg, the covenanting mother of Cuddie, whom the certain fear of losing homestead and kailyard did not prevent from testifying in season and out of season. In our utilitarian age we are not given to such intensity of belief and zeal as this, and it is just as well for us to know that at one time it actually existed and has exerted a powerful influence on the course of British history.

Scott could not have been a great writer had he not had an abundant share of humour, and of the lighter side of woman he writes with an appreciation and enjoyment we readily share with him. Perhaps it will be sufficient to mention one of these, for in their coquetry, and in their mischief, they are all alike. Jenny Dennison, in "*Old Mortality*," who skilfully keeps Tom Halliday, a trooper on the King's side, and Cuddie Headrigg, a Covenanter on the other, in good humour, and plays her pranks on both, with a view to the safety of her dear mistress, may be taken as a specimen. Her sharpness of tongue, her wit, her impudence, her good looks, are all needed in her situation, and they do not prevent her in the end making a good wife to the fortunate man she got for a husband. Her dissimulation had nearly succeeded in separating Morton and Miss Bellenden for good, but, as is right and proper in a novel, all ends well, and the hero and heroine, and all the surviving characters live happily ever after.

Fenella, in "*Peveril of the Peak*," stands somewhat alone. Her peculiar situation, and the cruel task which her father gave her to perform—that of keeping silent for many years her concealed affection for Julian, against whom she had to plot, were sufficient to embitter every source of good feeling,

and it is no wonder she vented her outraged feelings in terrifying antics and screams. In the end, when her affection compels her to break silence, she recognises the justice of her punishment, and willingly departs with her father, who had used her so cruelly, to foreign lands.

I think it a great thing to be able to say of Scott, that throughout the whole of the *Waverley Novels*, there are no *Lucretia Borgias*; in fact, no absolutely bad women. Even *Meg Merrilees*, the gipsy, and the companion of desperate smugglers, is yet anxious to preserve and restore the young *Bertram*, and *Guy Mannering* himself owed her more than one kindness. Poor *Madge Wildfire* also, whose wrongs might have excused some excess, yet helps *Jennie Deans* on her way to London.

It is a sad pity that Scott should be so much out of favour with novel readers. The easily-read trash, which is so abundant, has perverted the ordinary reader, and Scott is voted old-fashioned, and dry. For myself, I find in his pages recreation, amusement, knowledge, and I am thankful that the wholesomeness of his mind and his genius has given us so many beautiful creations of that part of mankind which is so necessary, and without which we should be the dullest and most uninteresting of all God's creatures.





THE MABINOGION.

BY JOHN DAVIES.

IN the Library of Jesus College, Oxford, is an Old Welsh MSS. containing Romances and Tales of great antiquity, and known as the "Red Book of Hergest." In the words of the editor of the final Welsh Text : "It consists of 362 foolscap folios in vellum, and the whole is written in double columns, in a style which is characteristic of Welsh MSS, belonging to the latter half of the 14th century," and yet again "Of all the Welsh MSS. none is so well known by name. The Red Book of Hergest may be described briefly as a Corpus of Kymric Literature, both prose and verse." In this MSS. are eleven tales classified thus : Mabinogion : Pwyll, Prince of Dyved ; Branwen, Daughter of Llyr ; Manawyddan, Son of Llyr ; Math, Son of Mathonwy : Tales : Maxen's Dreams, Lludd and Llevelys, Kulhwch and Olwen, Rhonabwy's Dream ; Romances : Owein and Lunet, Peredur, Gereint and Enid. No serious attempt was made to translate this MSS. until Lady Charlotte Guest issued her admirable collection in 1849, though I must not omit to mention, that there are a few isolated translations of two or three of the tales made at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century.

Lady Guest's three volumes contain a Welsh and English Text. The former is fairly accurate, but in the latter, in consequence, doubtless, of the whole being dedicated to her boys, who were probably the inspiration of her labours, where she considered necessary many parts of the stories were glossed over or omitted. She has done her work in a charming manner, the diction is elegant and polished, and does not appear to interfere with the rhythm and charm which lie in the narratives.

This English edition still remains the standard one, though Mr. Alfred Nutt has recently issued a pocket edition carefully edited. He is an ardent admirer of both the Mabinogion and Lady Guest's translation, speaking of the latter as a master-piece of English narrative prose, and as a classic. With but few alterations and additions he gives Lady Guest's versions verbatim, together with many scholarly notes.

It was through Lady Guest's edition that Renan was led to write his study on the "Poetry of the Celtic Races," in which he eulogistically says:—"A woman of distinction, Lady Charlotte Guest, charged herself with the task of acquainting Europe with the collection of Mabinogion, the pearl of Gaelic Literature, the completest expression of the Cymric genius. This magnificent work executed in twelve years, with the luxury that the wealthy English amateur knows how to use in his publications, will one day attest how full of life the consciousness of the Celtic race remained in the present century; only indeed the sincerest patriotism could inspire a woman to undertake and achieve so vast a literary monument." And it was also from this edition that Villemarque gave the world his French translation. From it likewise was Matthew Arnold moved to speak of it as: "That charming collection for which we owe such a debt of gratitude to

Lady Charlotte Guest." In 1881 Sidney Lanier published the English translation, uniformly with his "Boy's Froissart," and "Boy's King Arthur," under the title of "Boy's Mabinogion"; and this "Boy's Mabinogion" was my first introduction to this wonderful collection of romance.

One more edition I wish to mention is that edited by Mr. J. M. Edwards, and published by Hughes Wrexham. I wish to draw attention to this edition as giving some idea of what is being done to reach the young people in the present day. Every advantage is being offered them for an intimate acquaintance, gradually, with the old Welsh Literature. These volumes are in the vernacular, neatly got up, well printed and edited, and within the reach of all.

I have said that Lady Guest published a Welsh Text. Although her work was an excellent one, it was felt that a more scholarly text was necessary,—hers "may be said to belong to the pre-scientific era"—and so in 1887 two of the foremost Celtic scholars, Principal Rhys and Mr. Gwenogfryn Evans, collaborated, issuing what is now known as "The Text of the Mabinogion and other Welsh Tales from the Red Book of Hergest," and printed at the Clarendon Press. This is, again to quote from the Preface, "a diplomatic re-production of the original MSS." But this text is an excellent work, and has served for the later studies of scholars, and will in all probability continue to hold its own as *the* standard text.

The eleven tales in the "Red Book," which Lady Guest called "Mabinogion," are now found to divide themselves naturally into two parts. Principal Rhys says: "Since the publication of Lady Guest's handsome volumes, an idea prevails that any Welsh tale of respectable antiquity may be called a Mabinogi, but there is no warrant for extending the use of the term to any but the Four

branches of the Mabinogi, namely, Pwyll, Prince of Dyved ; Branwen, Daughter of Llyr ; Manawyddan, Son of Llyr ; and Math, Son of Mathonwy."

In the MSS. each of the four Mabinogi is prefaced by a remark : "Here commences the Mabinogi of, etc.," concluding "Here ends this branch of the Mabinogi." In the other Tales the word Mabinogion is never mentioned, this fact appears to me to lend considerable weight to Principal Rhys' opinion, and further there is a continuity in the narrative, forming almost a sequence ; indeed, they have been aptly termed as four chapters in one book. Many of the same characters are mentioned in each story. Stephens in his "Literature of the Kymry," a very able and critical book, although many of his theories are not considered to-day as authoritative, says :—"The term Mabinogion is applied indifferently to all the Tales ; but that is not strictly proper." Renan also anticipated this opinion when he remarked that "The right to apply the title 'Mabinogion' to the whole of the narratives . . . published, is open to doubt." This view then, as far as I have been able to gather, is generally accepted by scholars, yet in the second volume of stories issued by Mr. J. M. Edwards, and to which I previously referred, he has called them "Mabinogion," a title which I consider misleading, and for which I ventured to remonstrate. The only reason Mr. Edwards gives me is that they are known to the people at large as such, but that scholars know the correct view. This difficulty might easily have been overcome, and our objection met, by an explanatory reference in the preface of the second series.

The absence of the Arthurian Legend from the four branches of the Mabinogi, not only points to the greater antiquity of these tales than the others in the "Red Book," but has a deeper significance as in the words of Professor

Anwyl :—" Which seems to make it clear that in the legends of Gwynedd and Dyfed he had no place whatever," that is to say, that in the legends of the greater part of the geographical district known to us to-day as Wales, he had no place or part at the time these tales were originated. Arthur succeeded his father A.D. 500, dying in the first third of the sixth century. He does not appear in Welsh literature until the 12th century. Mr. Ivor John in an able study of the Mabinogion in that excellent series of "Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance and Folklore," issued by David Nutt, says :—"The Arthurian legend acquired immense popularity, and in the second half of the 12th century, over-ran the literature of all Europe. Wales shared in this movement, and most of the special Welsh Arthurian literature shews affinities with the continental forms. Now the tales with which we are dealing (the four referred to) know absolutely nothing of this later Arthur story, and must have been composed before it attained the important position it holds in Welsh literature of the 12th century."

Stephens, in his "Literature of the Kymry," gives another reason for supposing the four branches are older than the rest :—"In the earlier tales of Kymric origin, the machinery is invariably supernatural. The Mabinogion of Pwyll, Branwen, Math and Manawyddan, are evidences of this, the marvellous and moving power—is seldom—indeed, we may say, never personal courage, but invariably magic, and the same fact appears in verse as well as prose legends." This argument is, as, of course, against the Knight-errantry and spirit of adventure, which he finds in the remaining tales, and which he attributes to the fact of their being clearly post-Norman. Mr. Nutt trenchantly criticises this statement, remarking that "the assertion can only be excused by his ignorance of the kindred Celtic literature of

Ireland. In that literature the *spirit* of knight-errantry is rampant, and was fostered by institutions akin—in their essence—to those of mediæval-knighthood. It cannot be doubted that both spirit and institution flourished in ancient Wales as in ancient Ireland."

As to the origin of any of the tales nothing is known. In their transition by generation after generation of bards they doubtless multiplied greatly, both in legend and detail. Professor Anwyl in a series of articles in the "*Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*," has very ably produced an extensive list of legends, local and national, which he declares were skilfully interwoven into even one branch of the Mabinogi. When this line of research is carried through, and some of the local legends expertly examined, we may be able to come to a closer touch with the dating of much of this interesting lore. One Welshman in his eagerness to get as near the Deluge for origin as possible, remarks with enthusiasm:—"According to account these are the oldest things in our literature. It is true they were inscribed in the Red Book of Hergest about the 13th century. But they are centuries older than that; they are older than the Gospel, and were recited before the Romans or Saxons saw our country."

Matthew Arnold, in "The study of Celtic Literature," marshalled facts to point to the existence of early Welsh literature, and this was great testimony from one who said that: "He had no ends to serve in finding in Celtic Literature more than is there," and that "he must surely be without the bias which has so often rendered Welsh students extravagant." His earliest testimony is that of Lucan fifty years after Christ, to the Celtic race being then "wiser than their neighbours," and so he gives his authorities right up to the period at which this "wisdom" was committed to MSS., after which surmise ceases.

Much has been said and written about the influence of the Irish stories upon the Mabinogion. Mr. Ivor John, after a fairly exhaustive comparison of the early Welsh and Irish tales writes: "We shall therefore treat the four branches of the Mabinogi as the degraded Brythonic developments of early Celtic myth-roots, owing their deeper resemblances to Irish Tales to original community of myth, and their more superficial resemblances to late influences from Irish sources."

Mr. Nutt considers that the Mabinogion, properly so called, were probably re-dacted in the last quarter of the 11th century. They had been transmitted orally by the bards for many centuries. They were first committed to MSS. as has already been noticed, in the 14th century, and by the monks it is presumed.

Admitting then that the four Branches of the Mabinogi, which are prose stories with occasional bursts of poetry, are of greater antiquity, it is important to take note of the judgment of Principal Rhys here:—"Strictly speaking the word Mabinog is a technical term belonging to the bardic system, and it means a literary apprentice. In other words a Mabinog was a young man who had not yet acquired the art of making verse, but one who received instruction from a qualified Bard. The natural inference is that the Mabinogion meant the collection of things which formed the Mabinog's literary training, his stock-in-trade, so to say; for he was probably allowed to relate the tales forming the four Branches of the Mabinogi at a fixed price established by law or custom. If he aspired to a place in the hierarchy of letters he must acquire the poetic art."

Of the Bards I do not intend to say much, although they form an interesting feature in the history of early Welsh literature. It is evident there must have been several

grades of superiority. Many of the Bards were men of distinction, of high position, and of power. They were always considered necessary to the complete equipment of any regal household. Laws were framed for their guidance and protection—their fees and payments were fully set forth in these ancient documents. Where they were not household fixtures the appointed time of their appearance was a day of rejoicing and pomp. A Bard or "Clerwr," i.e., "travelling bard," was always a welcome guest. Stephens, in speaking of the habits of the travelling bards, says: "This migratory custom bears considerable resemblance to the practices of the Trouveres of the North, and the Troubadours of the South of France; and the Bards, Clerwyr, and Minstrels of Wales correspond pretty closely to the bards, rhymers and jongleurs of the age of chivalry." It was evident then that the Mabinog, the literary apprentice, had to graduate through the various stages referred to until he blossomed into a fully-fledged Bard. We have no index to any other of his duties, and we fear to follow this point much further, lest we should be rudely awakened from a long-cherished fancy that Bards are born and not made.

It has been observed that the Mabinog was allowed to recite the Mabinogi at a fixed price. What this was is very uncertain, but one author has ventured to assume there is some resemblance to this payment in an old Irish story, "Vision of Mac Longlimme." The reward of the recital of this story is "a whitespotted, red-eared cow, a shirt of new linen, a woollen cloak with its brooch from a King and Queen, from married couples, from stewards, from princes to him who is able to tell and recite it to them." It is very likely that the late Queen was a student of Celtic Lore, for it was no uncommon thing for those people, who at various times met to entertain her and her Court, to

receive presents, or "a fixed price" for their labours, though I do not recollect hearing of any of these Troubadours or Jongleurs taking away with them a "white-spotted, red-eared cow," or even a "shirt of new linen." In all probability their fees were just as acceptable to them, as were the "red-eared cow and linen shirt" to the Mabinog of ancient days.

Looking at the Mabinogion from a literary point of view, there is no doubt they are exquisite examples of story-telling. The subject is ever clearly represented, there is a polish of manner which impresses one deeply upon comparison with some of the old Irish Sagas, both in language and detail. There is a singular charm about the Mabinogion which is hard to define, there is no grossness, such as one may come across in Malory's "*La Morte D'Arthur*"; even when approaching dangerous ground there is nothing that is as bad as, or at any rate worse, than much of the matter in some of our evening papers.

It is a remarkable feature in the Mabinogi that the people described are always high-born. They are always Kings, Princes, and noblemen; no mention is made of the lower classes—probably there were no lower classes in Wales until the Saxons came.



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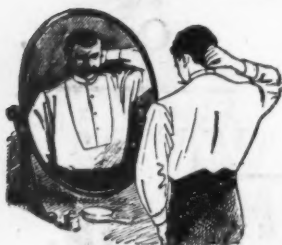
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